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EXPOSITIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
ST. JOHN

CHAPTERS I. TO VIII.

BY
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THE WORD IN ETERNITY, IN THE WORLD, AND IN THE FLESH

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2. The same was in the beginning with God. 3. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. 4. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. 11. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. 12. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.'—JOHN i. 1-14.

THE other Gospels begin with Bethlehem; John begins with 'the bosom of the Father.' Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish high-priests; John dates his 'in the beginning.' To attempt adequate exposition of these verses in our narrow limits is absurd; we can only note the salient points of this, the profoundest page in the New Testament.

The threefold utterance in verse 1 carries us into the depths of eternity, before time or creatures were. Genesis and John both start from 'the beginning,' but, while Genesis works downwards from that point and tells what followed, John works upwards and tells what preceded—if we may use that term in speaking of what lies beyond time. Time and creatures came into being, and, when they began, the Word 'was.' Surely no form of speech could more emphatically

declare absolute, uncreated being, outside the limits of time. Clearly, too, no interpretation of these words fathoms their depth, or makes worthy sense, which does not recognise that the Word is a person. The second clause of verse 1 asserts the eternal communion of the Word with God. The preposition employed means accurately 'towards,' and expresses the thought that in the Word there was motion or tendency towards, and not merely association with, God. It points to reciprocal, conscious communion, and the active going out of love in the direction of God. The last clause asserts the community of essence, which is not inconsistent with distinction of persons, and makes the communion of active Love possible; for none could, in the depths of eternity, dwell with and perfectly love and be loved by God, except one who Himself was God.

Verse 1 stands apart as revealing the pretemporal and essential nature of the Word. In it the deep ocean of the divine nature is partially disclosed, though no created eye can either plunge to discern its depths or travel beyond our horizon to its boundless, shoreless extent. The remainder of the passage deals with the majestic march of the self-revealing Word through creation, and illumination of humanity, up to the climax in the Incarnation.

John repeats the substance of verse 1 in verse 2, apparently in order to identify the Agent of creation with the august person whom he has disclosed as filling eternity. By Him creation was effected, and, because He was what verse 1 has declared Him to be, therefore was it effected by Him. Observe the three steps marked in three consecutive verses. 'All things were made by Him'; literally 'became,' where the

emergence into existence of created things is strongly contrasted with the divine 'was' of verse 1. 'Through Him' declares that the Word is the agent of creation; 'without Him' (literally, 'apart from Him') declares that created things continue in existence because He communicates it to them. Man is the highest of these 'all things,' and verse 4 sets forth the relation of the Word to Him, declaring that 'life,' in all the width and height of its possible meanings, inheres in Him, and is communicated by Him, with its distinguishing accompaniment, in human nature, of light, whether of reason or of conscience.

So far, John has been speaking as from the upper or divine side, but in verse 5 he speaks from the under or human, and shows us how the self-revelation of the Word has, by some mysterious necessity, been conflict. The 'darkness' was not made by Him, but it is there, and the beams of the light have to contend with it. Something alien must have come in, some catastrophe have happened, that the light should have to stream into a region of darkness.

John takes 'the Fall' for granted, and in verse 5 describes the whole condition of things, both within and beyond the region of special revelation. The shining of the light is continuous, but the darkness is obstinate. It is the tragedy and crime of the world that the darkness will not have the light. It is the long-suffering mercy of God that the light repelled is not extinguished, but shines meekly on.

Verses 6-13 deal with the historical appearance of the Word. The Forerunner is introduced, as in the other Gospels; and, significantly enough, this Evangelist calls him only 'John,'—omitting 'the Baptist,' as was very natural to him, the other John, who would feel

less need for distinguishing the two than others did. The subordinate office of a witness to the light is declared positively and negatively, and the dignity of such a function is implied. To witness to the light, and to be the means of leading men to believe, was honour for any man.

The limited office of the Forerunner serves as contrast to the transcendent lustre of the true Light. The meaning of verse 9 may be doubtful, but verses 10 and 11 clearly refer to the historical manifestation of the Word, and probably verse 9 does so too. Possibly, however, it rather points to the inner revelation by the Word, which is the 'light of men.' In that case the phrase 'that cometh into the world' would refer to 'every man,' whereas it is more natural in this context to refer it to 'the light,' and to see in the verse a reference to the illumination of humanity consequent on the appearance of Jesus Christ. The use of 'world' and 'came' in verses 10 and 11 points in that direction. Verse 9 represents the Word as 'coming'; verse 10 regards Him as come—'He was in the world.'

Note the three clauses, so like, and yet so unlike the august three in verse 1. Note the sad issue of the coming—'The world knew Him not.' In that 'world' there was one place where He might have looked for recognition, one set of people who might have been expected to hail Him; but not only the wide world was blind ('knew not'), but the narrower circle of 'His own' fought against what they knew to be light ('received not').

But the rejection was not universal, and John proceeds to develop the blessed consequences of receiving the light. For the first time he speaks the great word

‘believe.’ The act of faith is the condition or means of ‘receiving.’ It is the opening of the mental eye for the light to pour in. We possess Jesus in the measure of our faith. The object of faith is ‘His name,’ which means, not this or that collocation of letters by which He is designated, but His whole self-revelation. The result of such faith is ‘the right to become children of God,’ for through faith in the only-begotten Son we receive the communication of a divine life which makes us, too, sons. That new life, with its consequence of sonship, does not belong to human nature as received from parents, but is a gift of God mediated through faith in the Light who is the Word.

Verse 14 is not mere repetition of the preceding, but advances beyond it in that it declares the wonder of the way by which that divine Word did enter into the world. John here, as it were, draws back the curtain, and shows us the transcendent miracle of divine love, for which he has been preparing in all the preceding. Note that he has not named ‘the Word’ since verse 1, but here he again uses the majestic expression to bring out strongly the contrast between the ante-temporal glory and the historical lowliness. These four words, ‘The Word became flesh,’ are the foundation of all our knowledge of God, of man, of the relations between them, the foundation of all our hopes, the guarantee of all our peace, the pledge of all blessedness. ‘He tabernacled among us.’ As the divine glory of old dwelt between the cherubim, so Jesus is among men the true Temple, wherein we see a truer glory than that radiant light which filled the closed chamber of the holy of holies. Rapturous remembrances rose before the Apostle as he wrote,

‘We beheld His glory’; and he has told us what he has beheld and seen with his eyes, that we also may have fellowship with him in beholding. The glory that shone from the Incarnate Word was no menacing or dazzling light. He and it were ‘full of grace and truth,’ perfect Love bending to inferiors and sinners, with hands full of gifts and a heart full of tenderness and the revelation of reality, both as regards God and man. His grace bestows all that our lowness needs, His truth teaches all that our ignorance requires. All our gifts and all our knowledge come from the Incarnate Word, in whom believing we are the children of God.

THE LIGHT AND THE LAMPS

‘He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.’—JOHN i. 8.

‘He was a burning and a shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in His light.’—JOHN v. 35.

MY two texts both refer to John the Baptist. One of them is the Evangelist’s account of him, the other is our Lord’s eulogium upon him. The latter of my texts, as the Revised Version shows, would be more properly rendered, ‘He was a lamp’ rather than ‘He was a light,’ and the contrast between the two words, the ‘light’ and ‘the lamps,’ is my theme. I gather all that I would desire to say into three points: ‘that Light’ and its witnesses; the underived Light and the kindled lamps; the undying Light and the lamps that go out.

I. First of all, then, the contrast suggested to us is between ‘that Light’ and its witnesses.

John, in that profound prologue which is the deepest

part of Scripture, and lays firm and broad in the depths the foundation-stones of a reasonable faith, draws the contrast between 'that Light' and them whose business it was to bear witness to it. As for the former, I cannot here venture to dilate upon the great, and to me absolutely satisfying and fundamental, thoughts that lie in these eighteen first verses of this Gospel. 'The Word was with God,' and that Word was the Agent of Creation, the Fountain of Life, the Source of the Light which is inseparable from all human life. John goes back, with the simplicity of a child's speech, which yet is deeper than all philosophies, to a Beginning, far anterior to 'the Beginning' of which Genesis speaks, and declares that before creation that Light shone; and he looks out over the whole world, and declares, that before and beyond the limits of the historical manifestation of the Word in the flesh, its beams spread over the whole race of man. But they are all focussed, if I may so speak, and gathered to a point which burns as well as illuminates, in the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ in the flesh. 'That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'

Next, he turns to the highest honour and the most imperative duty laid, not only upon mighty men and officials, but upon all on whose happy eyeballs this Light has shone, and into whose darkened hearts the joy and peace and purity of it have flowed, and he says, 'He was sent'—and they are sent—'to bear witness of that Light.' It is the noblest function that a man can discharge. It is a function that is discharged by the very existence through the ages of a community which, generation after generation, subsists, and generation after generation manifests in varying degrees of bright-

ness, and with various modifications of tint, the same light. There is the family character in all true Christians, with whatever diversities of idiosyncrasies, and national life or ecclesiastical distinctions. Whether it be Francis of Assisi or John Wesley, whether it be Thomas à Kempis or George Fox, the light is one that shines through these many-coloured panes of glass, and the living Church is the witness of a living Lord, not only before it, and behind it, and above it, but living in it. They are 'light' because they are irradiated by Him. They are 'light' because they are 'in the Lord.' But not only by the fact of the existence of such a community is the witness-bearing effected, but it comes as a personal obligation, with immense weight of pressure and immense possibilities of joy in the discharge of it, to every Christian man and woman.

What, then, is the witness that we all are bound to bear, and shall bear if we are true to our obligations and to our Lord? Mainly, dear brethren, the witness of experience. That a Christian man shall be able to stand up and say, 'I know this because I live it, and I testify to Jesus Christ because I for myself have found Him to be the life of my life, the Light of all my seeing, the joy of my heart, my home, and my anchorage'—that is the witness that is impregnable. And there is no better sign of the trend of Christian thought to-day than the fact that the testimony of experience is more and more coming to be recognised by thoughtful men and writers as being the sovereign attestation of the reality of the Light. 'I see'; that is the proof that light has touched my eyeballs. And when a man can contrast, as some of us can, our present vision with our erstwhile darkness, then the evidence, like that of the sturdy blind man in

the Gospels, who had nothing to say in reply to the subtleties and Rabbinical traps and puzzles but only 'I was blind; now I see'—his experience is likely to have the effect that it had in another miracle of healing: 'Beholding the man which was healed standing amongst them, they could say nothing against it.' I should think they could not.

But there is one thing that will always characterise the true witnesses to that Light, and that is self-suppression. Remember the beautiful, immovable humility of the Baptist about whom these texts were spoken: 'What sayest thou of thyself?' 'I am a Voice,' that is all. 'Art thou that Prophet?' 'No!' 'Art thou the Christ?' 'No! I am nothing but a Voice.' And remember how, when John's disciples tried to light the infernal fires of jealousy in his quiet heart by saying, 'He whom thou didst baptise, and to whom thou didst give witness'—He whom thou didst start on His career—'is baptising,' poaching upon thy preserves, 'and all men come unto Him,' the only answer that he gave was, 'The friend of the Bridegroom'—who stands by in a quiet, dark corner—'rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice.' Keep yourself out of sight, Christian teachers and preachers; put Christ in the front, and hide behind Him.

II. Now let me ask you to look at the other contrast that is suggested by our other text. The underrived light and the kindled lamps.

It is possible to read the words of that second text thus—'He was a lamp kindled and (therefore) shining.' But whether that be the meaning, or whether the usual rendering is correct, the emblem itself carries the same thought, for a lamp must be lit by contact with a light, and must be fed with oil, if its flame is

to be sustained. And so the very metaphor — whatever the force of the ambiguous word—in its eloquent contrast between the Light and the lamp, suggests this thought, that the one is underived, self-fed, and therefore undying, and that the other owes all its flame to the touch of that uncreated Light, and burns brightly only on condition of its keeping up the contact with Him, and being fed continually from His stores of radiance.

I need not say more than a word with regard to the former member of that contrast suggested here. That unlit Light derives its brilliancy, according to the Scriptural teaching, from nothing but its divine union with the Father. So that long before there were eyes to see, there was the irradiation and outshining of the Father's glory. I do not enter into these depths, but this I would say, that what is called the 'originality' of Jesus is only explained when we reverently see in that unique life the shining through a pure humanity, as through a sheet of alabaster, of that underived, divine Light. Jesus is an insoluble problem to men who will not see in Him the Eternal Light which 'in the beginning was with God.' You find in Him no trace of gradual acquisition of knowledge, or of arguing or feeling His way to His beliefs. You find in Him no trace of consciousness of a great horizon of darkness encompassing the region where He sees light. You find in Him no trace of a recognition of other sources from which He has drawn any portion of His light. You find in Him the distinct declaration that His relation to truth is not the relation of men who learn, and grow, and acquire, and know in part; for, says He, '*I am the Truth.*' He stands apart from us all, and above us all, in that He owes His radiance

to none, and can dispense it to every man. The question which the puzzled Jews asked about Him, 'How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?' may be widened out to all the characteristics of His human life. To me the only answer is: 'Thou art the King of glory, O Christ! Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father.'

Dependent on Him are the little lights which He has lit, and in the midst of which He walks. Union with Jesus Christ—'that Light'—is the condition of all human light. That is true over all regions, as I believe. 'The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding.' The candle of the Lord shines in every man, and 'that true Light lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Thinker, student, scientist, poet, author, practical man—all of them are lit from the uncreated Source, and all of them, if they understand their own nature, would say, 'In Thy light do we see Light.'

But especially is this great thought true and exemplified within the limits of the Christian life. For the Christian to be touched with Christ's Promethean finger is to flame into light. And the condition of continuing to shine is to continue the contact which first illuminated. A break in the contact, of a finger's breadth, is as effectual as one of a mile. Let Christian men and women, if they would shine, remember, 'Ye are light in the Lord'; and if we stray, and get without the circle of the Light, we pass into darkness, and ourselves cease to shine.

Brethren, it is threadbare truth, that the condition of Christian vitality and radiance is close and unbroken contact with Jesus Christ, the Source of all light. Threadbare; but if we lived as if we believed it, the

Church would be revolutionised and the world illuminated; and many a smoking wick would flash up into a blazing torch. Let Christian people remember that the words of my text define no special privilege or duty of any official or man of special endowments, but that to all of us has been said, 'Ye are My witnesses,' and to all of us is offered the possibility of being 'burning and shining lights' if we keep ourselves close to that Light.

III. Lastly, the second of my texts suggests—the contrast between the Undying Light and the lamps that go out.

'For a season ye were willing to rejoice in His light.' There is nothing in the present condition of the civilised and educated world more remarkable and more difficult for some people to explain than the contrast between the relation which Jesus Christ bears to the present age, and the relation which all other great names in the past—philosophers, poets, guides of men—bear to it. There is nothing in the world the least like the vividness, the freshness, the closeness, of the personal relation which thousands and thousands of people, with common sense in their heads, bear to that Man who died nineteen hundred years ago. All others pass, sooner or later, into the darkness. Thickening mists of oblivion, fold by fold, gather round the brightest names. But here is Jesus Christ, whom all classes of thinkers and social reformers have to reckon with to-day, who is a living power amongst the trivialities of the passing moment, and in whose words and in the teaching of whose life serious men feel that there lie undeveloped yet, and certainly not yet put into practice, principles which are destined to revolutionise society and change the world. And how does that come?

I am not going to enter upon that question; I only ask you to think of the contrast between His position, in this generation, to communities and individuals, and the position of all other great names which lie in the past. Why, it does not take more than a lifetime such as mine, for instance, to remember how the great lights that shone seventy years ago in English thinking and in English literature, have for the most part gone out, and what we young men thought to be bright particular stars, this new generation pooh-poohs as mere exhalations from the marsh or twinkling and uncertain tapers, and you will find their books in the twopenny-box at the bookseller's door. A cynical diplomatist, in one of our modern dramas, sums it up, after seeing the death of a revolutionary, 'I have known eight leaders of revolts.' And some of us could say, 'We have known about as many guides of men who have been forgotten and passed away.' 'His Name shall endure for ever. His name shall continue as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him; all generations shall call Him blessed.' Even Shelley had the prophecy forced from him—

' The moon of Mahomet
Arose and it shall set,
While blazoned as on heaven's eternal noon,
The Cross leads generations on.'

We may sum up the contrast between the undying Light and the lamps that go out in the old words: 'They truly were many, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, but this Man, because He continueth ever . . . is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through Him.'

So, brethren, when lamps are quenched, let us look to the Light. When our own lives are darkened because our household light is taken from its candlestick, let us lift up our hearts and hopes to Him that abideth for ever. Do not let us fall into the folly, and commit the sin, of putting our heart's affections, our spirit's trust, upon any that can pass and that must change. We need a Person whom we can clasp, and who never will glide from our hold. We need a Light uncreated, self-fed, eternal. 'Whilst ye have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of light.'

'THREE TABERNACLES'

'The Word . . . dwelt among us.'—JOHN i. 14.

' . . . He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them.'—REV. vii. 15.

' . . . Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them.
—REV. xxi. 3.

THE word rendered 'dwelt,' in these three passages, is a peculiar one. It is only found in the New Testament—in this Gospel and in the Book of Revelation. That fact constitutes one of the many subtle threads of connection between these two books, which at first sight seem so extremely unlike each other; and it is a morsel of evidence in favour of the common authorship of the Gospel and of the Apocalypse, which has often, and very vehemently in these latter days of criticism, been denied.

The force of the word, however, is the matter to which I desire especially to draw attention. It literally means 'to dwell in a tent,' or, if we may use such a word, 'to tabernacle,' and there is no doubt a reference

to the Tabernacle in which the divine Presence abode in the wilderness and in the land of Israel before the erection. In all three passages, then, we may see allusion to that early symbolical dwelling of God with man. 'The Word tabernacled among us'; so is the truth for earth and time. 'He that sitteth upon the throne shall spread His tabernacle upon' the multitude which no man can number, who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb; that is the truth for the spirits of just men made perfect, the waiting Church, which expects the redemption of the body. 'God shall tabernacle with them'; that is the truth for the highest condition of humanity, when the Tabernacle of God shall be with redeemed men in the new earth. 'Let us build three tabernacles,' one for the Incarnate Christ, one for the interspace between earth and heaven, and one for the culmination of all things. And it is to these three aspects of the one thought, set forth in rude symbol by the movable tent in the wilderness, that I ask you to turn now.

I. First, then, we have to think of that Tabernacle for earth. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, as in a tent, amongst us.'

The human nature, the visible, material body of Jesus Christ, in which there enshrined itself the everlasting Word, which from the beginning was the Agent of all divine revelation, that is the true Temple of God. When we begin to speak about the special presence of Omnipresence in any one place, we soon lose ourselves, and get into deep waters of glory, where there is no standing. And I do not care to deal here with theological definitions or thorny questions, but simply to set forth, as the language of my text sets before us, that one transcendent, wonderful, all-blessed

thought that this poor human nature is capable of, and has really once in the history of the world received into itself, the real, actual presence of the whole fulness of the Divinity. What must be the kindred and likeness between Godhood and manhood when into the frail vehicle of our humanity that wondrous treasure can be poured; when the fire of God can burn in the bush of our human nature, and that nature not be consumed? So it has been. 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

And when we come with our questions, How? In what manner? How can the lesser contain the greater? we have to be content with the recognition that the manner is beyond our fathoming, and to accept the fact, pressed upon our faith, that our hearts may grasp it and be at peace. God hath dwelt in humanity. The everlasting Word, who is the forthcoming of all the fulness of Deity into the realm of finite creatures, was made flesh and dwelt among us.

But the Tabernacle was not only the dwelling-place of God, it was also and, therefore, the place of Revelation of God. So in our text there follows, 'we beheld His glory.' As in the tent in the wilderness there hovered between the cutstretched wings of the silent cherubim, above the Mercy-seat, the brightness of the symbolical cloud which was expressly named 'the glory of God,' and was the visible manifestation of His real presence; so John would have us think that in that lowly humanity, with its curtains and its coverings of flesh, there lay shrined in the inmost place the brightness of the light of the manifest glory of God. 'We beheld His glory.' The rapturous adoration of the remembrance overcomes him, and he breaks his sentence, reckless of grammatical connection, as the fulness of

the blessed memory floods into his soul. 'That glory was as of the Only Begotten of the Father.' The manifestation of God in Christ is unique, as becomes Him who partakes of the nature of that God of whom He is the Representative and the Revealer.

And how did that glory make itself known to us? By miracle? Yes! As we read in the story of the first that Christ wrought, 'He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed upon Him.' By miracle? Yes! As we read His own promise at the grave of Lazarus: 'Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?' But, blessed be His name, miracle is not the highest manifestation of Christ's glory and of God's. The uniqueness of the revelation of Christ's glory in God does not depend upon the deeds which He wrought. For, as the context goes on to tell, the Word which tabernacled among us was 'full of grace and truth,' and therein is the glory most gloriously revealed.

The lambent light of stooping love that shone forth warning and attracting in His gentle life, and the clear white beam of unmingled truth that streamed from the radiant purity of Christ's life, revealed God to hearts that pine for love and spirits that hunger for truth, as no others of God's self-revealing works have done. And that revelation of the glory of God in the fulness of grace and truth is the highest possible revelation. For the divinest thing in God is love, and the true 'glory of God' is neither some symbolical flashing light nor the pomp of mere power and majesty; nor even those inconceivable and incommunicable attributes which we christen with names like Omnipotence and Omnipresence and Infinitude, and the like. These are all but the fringes of the brightness. The true central

heart and lustrous light of the glory of God lie in His love, and of that glory Christ is the unique Representative and Revealer, because He is the only Begotten Son, and 'full of grace and truth.'

Thus the Word tabernacled amongst us. And though the Tabernacle to outward seeming was covered by curtains and skins that hid all the glowing splendour within; yet in that lowly life that was lived in the body of His humiliation, and knew our limitations and our weaknesses, 'the glory of the Lord was revealed; and all flesh hath seen it together' and acknowledged the divine Presence there.

Still further the Tabernacle was the place of sacrifice. So in the tabernacle of His flesh Jesus offered up the one sacrifice for sins for ever. In the offering up of His human life in continuous obedience, and in the offering up of His body and blood in the bitter Passion of the Cross, He brought men nigh unto God.

Therefore, because of all these things, because the Tabernacle is the dwelling-place of God, the place of revelation, and the place of sacrifice, therefore, finally is it the meeting-place betwixt God and man. In the Old Testament it is always called by the name which our Revised Version has accurately substituted for 'tabernacle of the congregation,' namely 'tent of meeting.' The correctness of that rendering and the meaning of the name are established by several passages in the Old Testament, as for instance, 'There I will meet with you, to speak there unto thee, and there I will meet with the children of Israel.' So in Christ, who by His Incarnation lays His hand upon both, God touches man and man touches God. We who are afar off are made nigh, and in that 'true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man' we meet God and are glad.

'And so the word was flesh, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds.'

The temple for earth is 'the temple of His body.'

II. We have the Tabernacle for the Heavens.

In the context of our second passage we have a vision of the great multitude redeemed out of all nations and kindreds, 'standing before the Throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands.' The palms in their hands give important help towards understanding the vision. As has been often remarked, there are no heathen emblems in the Book of the Apocalypse. All its metaphors move within the circle of Jewish experiences and facts. So that we are not to think of the Roman palm of victory, but of the Jewish palm which was borne at the Feast of Tabernacles. What was the Feast of Tabernacles? A festival established on purpose to recall to the minds and to the gratitude of the Jews settled in their own land the days of their wandering in the wilderness. Part of the ritual of it was that during its celebration they builded for themselves booths or tabernacles of leaves and boughs of trees, under which they dwelt, thus reminding themselves of their nomad condition.

Now what beauty and power it gives to the word of my text, if we take in this allusion to the Jewish festival! The great multitude bearing the palms are keeping the feast, memorial of past wilderness wanderings; and 'He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle above them,' as the word might be here rendered. That is to say, He Himself shall build and be the tent in which they dwell; He Himself shall dwell with them in it. He Himself, in closer union than

can be conceived of here, shall keep them company during that feast.

What a thought of that condition—the condition as I believe represented in this vision—of the spirits of the just made perfect, ‘who wait for the adoption, to wit, the resurrection of the body,’ is given us if we take this point of view to interpret the whole lovely symbolism. It is all a time of glad, grateful remembrance of the wilderness march. It is all a time in which festal joys shall be theirs, and the memory of the trials and the weariness and the sorrow and the solitude that are past shall deepen to a more exquisite poignancy of delight, the rest and the fellowship and the felicity of that calm Presence, and God Himself shall spread His tent above them, lodge with them, and they with Him.

And so, dear brethren, rest in that assurance, that though we know so little of that state, we know this: ‘Absent from the body, present with the Lord,’ and that the happy company who bear the palms shall dwell in God, and God in them.

III. And now, lastly, look at that final vision which we have in these texts, which we may call the Tabernacle for the renewed earth.

I do not pretend to interpret the scenery and the setting of these Apocalyptic visions with dogmatic confidence, but it seems to me as if the emblems of this final vision coincide with dim hints in many other portions of Scripture; to the effect that some cosmical change having passed upon this material world in which we dwell, it, in some regenerated form, shall be the final abode of a regenerated and redeemed humanity. That, I think, is the natural interpretation of a great deal of Scriptural teaching.

For that highest condition there is set forth this as the all-sufficing light upon it. 'Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them.' The climax and the goal of all the divine working, and the long processes of God's love for, and discipline of, the world, are to be this, that He and men shall abide together in unity and concord. That is God's wish from the beginning. We read in one of the profound utterances of the Book of Proverbs how from of old the 'delights' of the Incarnate Wisdom which foreshadowed the Incarnate Word 'were with the sons of men.' And, at the close of all things, when the vision of this final chapter shall be fulfilled, God will say, settling Himself in the midst of a redeemed humanity, 'Lo! here will I dwell, for I have desired it. This is My rest for ever.' He will tabernacle with men, and men with Him.

We know not, and never shall know until experience strips the bandages from our eyes, what new methods of participation of the divine nature, and new possibilities of intimacy and intercourse with Him may be ours when the veils of flesh and sense and time have all dropped away. New windows may be opened in our spirits, from which we shall perceive new aspects of the divine character. New doors may be opened in our souls, from out of which we may pass to touch parts of His nature, all impalpable and inconceivable to us now. And when all the veils of a discordant moral nature are taken away, and we are pure, then we shall see, then we shall draw nigh to God. The thing that chiefly separates man from God is man's sin. When that is removed, the centrifugal force which kept our tiny orb apart from the great central sun being withdrawn, we shall, as it were, fall into the brightness and

be one, not losing our sense of individuality, which would be to lose all the blessedness, but united with Him in a union far more intimate than earth can parallel. 'The Tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He will tabernacle with them.'

Do not let us forget that this highest and ultimate hope that is held forth here, of the union and communion, perfect and perpetual, of humanity with God, does not sweep aside Jesus Christ. For through all eternity the Everlasting Word, the Christ who bears our nature in its glorified form, or, rather, whose nature in its glorified form we shall bear, is the Medium of Revelation, and the Medium of communication between man and God.

'I saw no Temple therein,' says this final vision of the Apocalypse, but 'God Almighty and the Lamb,' and these are the Temples thereof. Therefore through eternity God shall tabernacle with men, as He does tabernacle with us now through Him, in whom dwelleth as in its perennial habitation, 'all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.'

So we have the three tabernacles, for earth, for heaven, for the renewed earth; and these three, if I may say so, are like the triple division of that ancient Tabernacle in the wilderness: the Outer Court; the Holy Place; the Holiest of all. Let us enter into that outer court, and abide and commune with that God who comes near to us, revealing, forgiving, in the person of His Son, and then we shall pass from court to court, 'and go from strength to strength, until every one of us in Zion appear before God'; and enter into the Holiest of all, where 'within the veil' we shall receive splendours of revelation undreamed of here, and enjoy depths of communion to which the selectest

moments of fellowship with God on earth are shallow and poor.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST

‘And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’—JOHN i. 16.

WHAT a remarkable claim that is which the Apostle here makes for his Master! On the one side he sets His solitary figure as the universal Giver; on the other side are gathered the whole race of men, recipients from Him. As in the wilderness the children of Israel clustered round the rock from which poured out streams, copious enough for all the thirsty camp, John, echoing his Master’s words, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink,’ here declares ‘Of *His* fulness have *all we* received.’

I. Notice, then, the one ever full Source.

The words of my text refer back to those of the fourteenth verse: ‘The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.’ ‘And of His fulness have all we received.’ The ‘fulness’ here seems to mean that of which the Incarnate Word was full, the ‘grace and truth’ which dwelt without measure in Him; the unlimited and absolute completeness and abundance of divine powers and glories which ‘tabernacled’ in Him. And so the language of my text, both verbally and really, is substantially equivalent to that of the Apostle Paul. ‘In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him.’ The whole infinite Majesty, and inexhaustible resources of the divine nature, were incorporated and insphered in that Incarnate Word from whom all men may draw.

There are involved in that thought two ideas. One is the unmistakable assertion of the whole fulness of the divine nature as being in the Incarnate Word, and the other is that the whole fulness of the divine nature dwells in the Incarnate Word in order that men may get at it.

The words of my text go back, as I said, to the previous verse; but notice what an advance upon that previous verse they present to us. There we read, 'We beheld His glory.' To *behold* is much, but to *possess* is more. It is much to say that Christ comes to manifest God, but that is a poor, starved account of the purpose of His coming, if that is all you have to say. He comes to manifest Him. Yes! but He comes to communicate Him, not merely to dazzle us with a vision, not merely to show us Him as from afar, not merely to make Him known to understanding or to heart; but to bestow—in no mere metaphor, but in simple, literal fact—the absolute possession of the divine nature. 'We beheld His glory' is a reminiscence that thrills the Evangelist, though half a century has passed since the vision gleamed upon his eyes; but 'of His fulness have all we received' is infinitely and unspeakably more. And the manifestation was granted that the possession might be sure, for this is the very centre and heart of Christianity, that in Him who is Christianity God is not merely made known, but given; not merely beheld, but possessed.

In order that that divine fulness might belong to us there was needed that the Word should be made flesh; and there was further needed that incarnation should be crowned by sacrifice, and that life should be perfected in death. The alabaster box had to be broken before the house could be filled with the odour of the

ointment. If I may so say, the sack, the coarse-spun sack of Christ's humanity, had to be cut asunder in order that the wealth that was stored in it might be poured into our hands. God came near us in the life, but God became ours in the death, of His dear Son. Incarnation was needed for that great privilege—'we beheld His glory'; but the Crucifixion was needed in order to make possible the more wondrous prerogative: 'Of His fulness have all we received.' God gives Himself to men in the Christ whose life revealed and whose death imparted Him to the world.

And so He is the sole Source. All men, in a very real sense, draw from His fulness. 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' The life of the body and the life of the spirit willing, knowing, loving, all which makes life into light, all comes to us through that everlasting Word of God. And when that Word has 'become flesh and dwelt among us,' His gifts are not only the gifts of light and life, which all men draw from Him, but the gifts of grace and truth which all those who love Him receive at His hands. His gifts, like the water from some fountain, may flow underground into many of the pastures of the wilderness; and many a man is blessed by them who knows not from whence they come. It is He from whom all the truth, all the grace which illuminates and blesses humanity, flow into all lands in all ages.

II. Consider, then, again, the many receivers from the one Source. 'Of His fulness have all we received.'

Observe, we are not told definitely what it is that we receive. If we refer back to words in a previous verse, they may put us on the right track for answering the question, What is it that we get? 'He came unto His own,' says verse 11, 'and His own received Him not;

but as many as received Him, to them gave He power,' etc. That answers the question, What do we receive? Christ is more than all His gifts. All His gifts are treasured up in Him and inseparable from Him. We get Jesus Christ Himself.

The blessings that we receive may be stated in many different ways. You may say we get pardon, purity, hope, joy, the prospect of Heaven, power for service; all these and a hundred more designations by which we might describe the one gift. All these are but the consequences of our having got the Christ within our hearts. He does not give pardon and the rest, as a king might give pardon and honours, a thousand miles off, bestowing it by a mere word, upon some criminal, but He gives all that He gives because He gives Himself. The real possession that we receive is neither more nor less than a loving Saviour, to enter our spirits and abide there, and be the spirit of our spirits, and the life of our lives.

Then, notice the universality of this possession. John has said, in the previous words, '*We* beheld His glory.' He refers there, of course, to the comparatively small circle of the eye-witnesses of our Master's life; who, at the time when he wrote, must have been very, very few in number. They had had the prerogative of seeing with their eyes and handling with their hands the Word of life that '*was* manifested unto us'; and with that prerogative the duty of bearing witness of Him to the rest of men. But in the '*receiving*,' John associates with himself, and with the other eye-witnesses, all those who had listened to their word, and had received the truth in the love of it. '*We* beheld' refers to the narrower circle; '*we all* received' to the wider sweep of the whole Church. There is no

exclusive class, no special prerogative. Every Christian man, the weakest, the lowliest, the most uncultured, rude, ignorant, foolish, the most besotted in the past, who has wandered furthest away from the Master; whose spirit has been most destitute of all sparks of goodness and of God—receives from out of His fulness. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.' And every one of us, if we will, may have dwelling in our hearts, in the greatness of His strength, in the sweetness of His love, in the clearness of His illuminating wisdom, the Incarnate Word, the Comforter, the All-in-all whom 'we all receive.'

And, as I said, that word 'all' might have even a wider extension without going beyond the limits of the truth. For on the one side there stands Christ, the universal Giver; and grouped before Him, in all attitudes of weakness and of want, is gathered the whole race of mankind. And from Him there pours out a stream copious enough to supply all the necessities of every human soul that lives to-day, of every human soul that has lived in the past, of every one that shall live in the future. There is no limit to the universality except only the limit of the human will: 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

Think of that solitary figure of the Christ reared up, as it were, before the whole race of man, as able to replenish all their emptiness with His fulness, and to satisfy all their thirst with His sufficiency. Dear brother! you have a great gaping void in your heart—an aching emptiness there, which you know better than I can tell you. Look to Him who can fill it and it shall be filled. He can supply all your wants as He can supply all the wants of every soul of man. And after generations have drawn from Him, the water

will not have sunk one hairsbreadth in the great fountain, but there will be enough for all coming eternities as there has been enough for all past times. He is like His own miracle—the thousands are gathered on the grass, they do ‘all eat and are filled.’ As their necessities required the bread was multiplied, and at the last there was more left than there had seemed to be at the beginning. So ‘of His fulness have all we received’; and after a universe has drawn from it, for an Eternity, the fulness is not turned into scantiness or emptiness.

III. And so, lastly, notice the continuous flow from the inexhaustible Source. ‘Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.’

The word ‘for’ is a little singular. Of course it means *instead of, in exchange for*; and the Evangelist’s idea seems to be that as one supply of grace is given and used, it is, as it were, given back to the Bestower, who substitutes for it a fresh and unused vessel, filled with new grace. He might have said, grace *upon* grace; one supply being piled upon the other. But his notion is, rather, one supply given in substitution for the other, ‘new lamps for old ones.’

Just as a careful gardener will stand over a plant that needs water, and will pour the water on the surface until the earth has drunk it up, and then add a little more; so He gives step by step, grace for grace, an uninterrupted bestowal, yet regulated according to the absorbing power of the heart that receives it. Underlying that great thought are two things: the continuous communication of grace, and the progressive communication of grace. We have here the continuous communication of grace. God is always pouring Himself out upon us in Christ. There is a perpetual out-

flow from Him to us: if there is not a perpetual inflow into us from Him it is our fault, and not His. He is always giving, and His intention is that our lives shall be a continual reception. Are they? How many Christian men there are whose Christian lives at the best are like some of those Australian or Siberian rivers; in the dry season, a pond here, a stretch of sand, waterless and barren there, then another place with a drop of muddy water in some hollow, and then another stretch of sand, and so on. Why should not the ponds be linked together by a flashing stream? God is always pouring Himself out; why do we not always take Him in?

There is but one answer, and the answer is, that we do not fulfil the condition, which condition is simple faith. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God; even to them that believed on His name.' Faith is the condition of receiving, and wherever there is a continuous trust there will be an unbroken grace; and wherever there are interrupted gifts it is because there has been an intermitted trust in Him. Do not let your lives be like some dimly lighted road, with a lamp here, and a stretch of darkness, and then another twinkling light; let the light run all along the side of your path, because at every moment your heart is turning to Christ with trust. Make your faith continuous, and God will make His grace incessant, and out of His fulness you will draw continual supplies of needed strength.

But not only have we here the notion of continuous, but also, as it seems to me, of progressive gifts. Each measure of Christ received, if we use it aright, makes us capable of possessing more of Christ. And the measure of our capacity is the measure of His gift, and

the more we can hold the more we shall get. The walls of our hearts are elastic, the vessel expands by being filled out; it throbs itself wider by desire and faith. The wider we open our mouths the larger will be the gift that God puts into them. Each measure and stage of grace utilised and honestly employed will make us capable and desirous, and, therefore, possessors, of more and more of the grace that He gives. So the ideal of the Christian life, and God's intention concerning us, is not only that we should have an uninterrupted, but a growing possession, of Christ and of His grace.

Is that the case with you, my friend? Can you hold more of God than you could twenty years ago? Is there any more capacity in your soul for more of Christ than there was long, long ago? If there is you have more of Him; if you have not more of Him it is because you cannot contain more; and you cannot contain more because you have not desired more, and because you have been so wretchedly unfaithful in your use of what you had. The ideal is, 'they go from strength to strength,' and the end of that is, 'every one of them appeareth before God.'

So, dear brother, as the dash of the waves will hollow out some little indentation on the coast, and make it larger and larger until there is a great bay, with its headlands miles apart, and its deep bosom stretching far into the interior, and all the expanse full of flashing waters and leaping waves, so the giving Christ works a place for Himself in a man's heart, and makes the spirit which receives and faithfully uses the gifts which He brings, capable of more of Himself, and fills the widened space with larger gifts and new grace.

Only remember the condition of having Him is

trusting to His name and longing for His presence. 'If any man open the door I will come in.' We have Him if we trust Him. That trust is no mere passive reception, such as is the case with some empty jar which lies open-mouthed on the shore and lets the sea wash into it and out of it, as may happen. But the 'receive' of our text might be as truly rendered 'take.' Faith is an active taking, not a passive receiving. We must 'lay hold on eternal life.' Faith is the hand that grasps the offered gift, the mouth that feeds upon the bread of God, the voice that says to Christ, 'Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord; why standest Thou without?' Such a faith alone brings us into vital connection with Jesus. Without it, you will be none the richer for all His fulness, and may perish of famine in the midst of plenty, like a man dying of hunger outside the door of a granary. They who believe take the Saviour who is given, and they who take receive, and they who receive obtain day by day growing grace from the fulness of Christ, and so come ever nearer to the realisation of the ultimate purpose of the Father, that they should be 'filled with all the fulness of God.'

GRACE AND TRUTH

'The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

JOHN i. 17.

THERE are scarcely any traces, in the writings of the Apostle John, of that great controversy as to the relation of the Law and the Gospel which occupied and embittered so much of the work of the Apostle Paul. We have floated into an entirely different region in John's writings. The old controversies are

dead—settled, I suppose, mainly by Paul's own words, and also to a large extent by the logic of events. This verse is almost the only one in which John touches upon that extinct controversy, and here the Law is introduced simply as a foil to set off the brightness of the Gospel. All artists know the value of contrast in giving prominence. A dark background flashes up brighter colours into brilliancy. White is never so white as when it is relieved against black. And so here the special preciousness and distinctive peculiarities of what we receive in Christ are made more vivid and more distinct by contrast with what in old days 'was given by Moses.'

Every word in this verse is significant. 'Law' is set against 'grace and truth.' It was 'given'; they 'came.' Moses is contrasted with Christ. So we have a threefold antithesis as between Law and Gospel: in reference to their respective contents; in reference to the manner of their communication; and in reference to the person of their Founders. And I think, if we look at these three points, we shall get some clear apprehension of the glories of that Gospel which the Apostle would thereby commend to our affection and to our faith.

I. First of all, then, we have here the special glory of the contents of the Gospel heightened by the contrast with Law.

Law has no tenderness, no pity, no feeling. Tables of stone and a pen of iron are its fitting vehicles. Flashing lightnings and rolling thunders symbolise the fierce light which it casts upon men's duty and the terrors of its retribution. Inflexible, and with no compassion for human weakness, it tells us what we ought to be, but it does not help us to be it. It 'binds heavy

burdens, and grievous to be borne,' upon men's consciences, but puts not forth 'the tip of a finger' to enable men to bear them. And this is true about law in all forms, whether it be the Mosaic Law, or whether it be the law of our own country, or whether it be the laws written upon men's consciences. These all partake of the one characteristic, that they help nothing to the fulfilment of their own behests, and that they are barbed with threatenings of retribution. Like some avenging goddess, law comes down amongst men, terrible in her purity, awful in her beauty, with a hard light in her clear grey eyes—in the one hand the tables of stone, bearing the commandments which we have broken, and in the other a sharp two-edged sword.

And this is the opposite of all that comes to us in the Gospel. The contrast divides into two portions. The 'Law' is set against 'grace and truth.' Let us look at these two in order.

What we have in Christ is not law, but grace. Law, as I said, has no heart; the meaning of the Gospel is the unveiling of the heart of God. Law commands and demands; it says: 'This shalt thou do, or else—'; and it has nothing more that it can say. What is the use of standing beside a lame man, and pointing to a shining summit, and saying to him, 'Get up there, and you will breathe a purer atmosphere'? He is lying lame at the foot of it. There is no help for any soul in law. Men are not perishing because they do not know what they ought to do. Men are not bad because they doubt as to what their duty is. The worst man in the world knows a great deal more of what he ought to do than the best man in the world practises. So it is not for want of precepts that so many of us

are going to destruction, but it is for want of power to fulfil the precepts.

Grace is love giving. Law demands, grace bestows. Law comes saying 'Do this,' and our consciences respond to the imperativeness of the obligation. But grace comes and says, 'I will help thee to do it.' Law is God requiring; grace is God bestowing. 'Give what Thou commandest, and then command what Thou wilt.'

Oh, brethren! we have all of us written upon the fleshly tablets of our hearts solemn commandments which we know are binding upon us; and which we sometimes would fain keep, but cannot. Is this not a message of hope and blessedness that comes to us? Grace has drawn near in Jesus Christ, and a giving God, who bestows upon us a life that will unfold itself in accordance with the highest law, holds out the fulness of His gift in that Incarnate Word. Law has no heart; the Gospel is the unveiling of the heart of God. Law commands; grace is God bestowing Himself.

And still further, law condemns. Grace is love that bends down to an evildoer, and deals not on the footing of strict retribution with the infirmities and the sins of us poor weaklings. And so, seeing that no man that lives but hears in his heart an accusing voice, and that every one of us knows what it is to gaze upon lofty duties that we have shrunk from, upon plain obligations from the yoke of which we have selfishly and cowardly withdrawn our necks; seeing that every man, woman, and child listening to me now has, lurking in some corner of their hearts, a memory that only needs to be quickened to be a torture, and deeds that only need to have the veil

drawn away from them to terrify and shame them—oh! surely it ought to be a word of gladness for every one of us that, in front of any law that condemns us, stands forth the gentle, gracious form of the Christ that brings pardon, and ‘the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men.’ Thank God! law needed to be ‘given,’ but it was only the foundation on which was to be reared a better thing. ‘The law was given by Moses’—‘a schoolmaster,’ as conscience is to-day, ‘to bring us to Christ’ by whom comes the grace that loves, that stoops, that gives, and that pardons.

Still further, there is another antithesis here. The Gospel which comes by Christ is not law, but truth. The object of law is to regulate conduct, and only subordinately to inform the mind or to enlighten the understanding. The Mosaic Law had for its foundation, of course, a revelation of God. But that revelation of God was less prominent, proportionately, than the prescription for man’s conduct. The Gospel is the opposite of this. It has for its object the regulation of conduct; but that object is less prominent, proportionately, than the other, the manifestation and the revelation of God. The Old Testament says ‘Thou shalt’; the New Testament says ‘God is.’ The Old was Law; the New is Truth.

And so we may draw the inference, on which I do not need to dwell, how miserably inadequate and shallow a conception of Christianity that is which sets it forth as being mainly a means of regulating conduct, and how false and foolish that loose talk is that we hear many a time.—‘Never mind about theological subtleties; conduct is the main thing.’ Not so. The Gospel is not law; the Gospel is truth. It

is a revelation of God to the understanding and to the heart, in order that thereby the will may be subdued, and that then the conduct may be shaped and moulded. But let us begin where it begins, and let us remember that the morality of the New Testament has never long been held up high and pure, where the theology of the New Testament has been neglected and despised. 'The law came by Moses; truth came by Jesus Christ.'

But, still further, let me remind you that, in the revelation of a God who is gracious, giving to our emptiness and forgiving our sins—that is to say, in the revelation of grace—we have a far deeper, nobler, more blessed conception of the divine nature than in law. It is great to think of a righteous God, it is great and ennobling to think of One whose pure eyes cannot look upon sin, and who wills that men should live pure and noble and Godlike lives. But it is far more and more blessed, transcending all the old teaching, when we sit at the feet of the Christ who gives, and who pardons, and look up into His deep eyes, with the tears of compassion shining in them, and say: 'Lo! This is our God! We have waited for Him and He will save us.' That is a better truth, a deeper truth than prophets and righteous men of old possessed; and to us there has come, borne on the wings of the mighty angel of His grace, the precious revelation of the Father-God whose heart is love. 'The law was given by Moses,' but brighter than the gleam of the presence between the Cherubim is the lambent light of gentle tenderness that shines from the face of Jesus Christ. Grace, and therefore truth, a deeper truth, came by Him.

And, still further, let me remind you of how this

contrast is borne out by the fact that all that previous system was an adumbration, a shadow and a premonition of the perfect revelation that was to come. Temple, priest, sacrifice, law, the whole body of the Mosaic constitution of things was, as it were, a shadow thrown along the road in advance by the swiftly coming King. The shadow fell before Him, but when He came the shadow disappeared. The former was a system of types, symbols, pictures. Here is the reality that antiquates and fulfils and transcends them all. 'The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

II. Now, secondly, look at the other contrast that is here, between giving and coming.

I do not know that I have quite succeeded in making clear to my own mind the precise force of this antithesis. Certainly there is a profound meaning if one can fathom it; perhaps one might put it best in something like the following fashion.

The word rendered 'came' might be more correctly translated 'became,' or 'came into being.' The law was *given*; grace and truth *came to be*.

Now, what do we mean when we talk about a law being given? We simply mean, I suppose, that it is promulgated, either in oral or in written words. It is, after all, no more than so many words. It is given when it is spoken or published. It is a verbal communication at the best. 'But grace and truth came to be.' They are realities; they are not words. They are not communicated by sentences, they are actual existences; and they spring into being as far as man's historical possession and experience of them are concerned—they spring into being in Jesus Christ, and through Him they belong to us all. Not that there

was no grace, no manifest love of God, in the world, nor any true knowledge of Him before the Incarnation, but the earlier portions of this chapter remind us that all of grace, however restrained and partial, that all of truth, however imperfect and shadowy it may have been, which were in the world before Christ came, were owing to the operation of that Eternal Word 'Who became flesh and dwelt among us,' and that these, in comparison with the affluence and the fulness and the nearness of grace and truth after Christ's coming, were so small and remote that it is not an exaggeration to say that, as far as man's possession and experience of them are concerned, the giving love of God and the clear and true knowledge of His deep heart of tenderness and grace, sprang into being with the historical manifestation of Jesus Christ the Lord.

He comes to reveal by no words. His gift is not like the gift that Moses brought down from the mountain, merely a writing upon tables; His gift is not the letter of an outward commandment, nor the letter of an outward revelation. It is the thing itself which He reveals by being it. He does not speak about grace, He brings it; He does not show us God by His words, He shows us God by His acts. He does not preach about Him, but He lives Him, He manifests Him. His gentleness, His compassion, His miracles, His wisdom, His patience, His tears, His promises; all these are the very Deity in action before our eyes; and instead of a mere verbal revelation, which is so imperfect and so worthless, grace and truth, the living realities, are flashed upon a darkened world in the face of Jesus Christ. How cold, how hard, how superficial, in comparison with that fleshly table of the

heart of Christ on which grace and truth were written, are the stony tables of law, which bore after all, for all their majesty, only words which are breath and nothing besides.

III. And so, lastly, look at the contrast that is drawn here between the persons of the Founders.

I do not suppose that we are to take into consideration the difference between the limitations of the one and the completeness of the other. I do not suppose that the Apostle was thinking about the difference between the reluctant service of the Lawgiver and the glad obedience of the Son; or between the passion and the pride that sometimes marred Moses' work, and the continual calmness and patient meekness that perfected the sacrifice of Jesus. Nor do I suppose that there flashed before his memory the difference between that strange tomb where God buried the prophet, unknown of men, in the stern solitude of the desert, true symbol of the solemn mystery and awful solitude with which the law which we have broken invests death, to our trembling consciences, and the grave in the garden with the spring flowers bursting round it, and visited by white-robed angels, who spoke comfort to weeping friends, true picture of what His death makes the grave for all His followers.

But I suppose he was mainly thinking of the contrast between the relation of Moses to his law, and of Christ to His Gospel. Moses was but a medium. His personality had nothing to do with his message. You may take away Moses, and the law stands all the same. But Christ is so interwoven with Christ's message that you cannot rend the two apart; you cannot have the figure of Christ melt away, and the gift that Christ brought remain. If you extinguish

the sun you cannot keep the sunlight; if you put away Christ in the fulness of His manhood and of His divinity, in the power of His Incarnation and the omnipotence of His cross—if you put away Christ from Christianity, it collapses into dust and nothingness.

So, dear brethren, do not let any of us try that perilous experiment. You cannot melt away Jesus and keep grace and truth. You cannot tamper with His character, with His nature, with the mystery of His passion, with the atoning power of His cross, and preserve the blessings that He has brought to the world. If you want the grace which is the unveiling of the heart of God, the gift of a giving God and the pardon of a forgiving Judge; or if you want the truth, the reality of the knowledge of Him, you can only get them by accepting Christ. '*I am the Truth, and the Way, and the Life.*' There is a 'law given which gives life,' and '*righteousness is by that law.*' There is a Person who is the Truth, and our knowledge of the truth is through that Person, and through Him alone. By humble faith receive Him into your hearts, and He will come bringing to you the fulness of grace and truth.

THE WORLD'S SIN-BEARER

'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'—JOHN i. 29.

OUR Lord, on returning from His temptation in the wilderness, came straight to John the Baptist. He was welcomed with these wonderful and rapturous words, familiarity with which has deadened our sense of their greatness. How audacious they would sound to some of their first hearers! Think of these two,

one of them a young Galilean carpenter, to whom His companion witnesses and declares that He is of world-wide and infinite significance. It was the first public designation of Jesus Christ, and it throws into exclusive prominence one aspect of His work.

John the Baptist summing up the whole of former revelation which concentrated in Him, pointed a designating finger to Jesus and said, 'That is He!' My text is the sum of all Christian teaching ever since. My task, and that of all preachers, if we understand it aright, is but to repeat the same message, and to concentrate attention on the same fact—'The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' It is the one thing needful for you, dear friend, to believe. It is the truth that we all need most of all. There is no reason for our being gathered together now, except that I may beseech you to behold for yourselves the Lamb of God which takes away the world's sin.

I. Now let me ask you to note, first, that Jesus Christ is the world's sin-bearer.

The significance of the first clause of my text, 'the Lamb of God,' is deplorably weakened if it is taken to mean only, or mainly, that Jesus Christ, in the sweetness of His human nature, is gentle and meek and patient and innocent and pure. It *does* mean all that, thank God! But it was no mere description of Christ's disposition which John the Baptist conceived himself to be uttering, as is clear by the words that follow in the next clause. His reason for selecting (under divine guidance, as I believe) that image of 'the Lamb of God,' went a great deal deeper than anything in the temper of the Person of whom he was speaking. Many streams of ancient prophecy and ritual converge

upon this emblem, and if we want to understand what is meant by the designation 'the Lamb of God,' we must not content ourselves with the sentimentalisms which some superficial teachers have supposed to exhaust the significance of the expression; but we must submit to be led back by John, who was the summing up of all the ancient Revelation, to the sources in that Revelation from which he drew this metaphor.

First and chiefest of these, as I take it, are the words which no Jew ever doubted referred to the Messiah, until after He had come, and the Rabbis would not believe in Him, and so were bound to hunt up another interpretation—I mean the great words in the prophecy which, I suppose, is familiar to most of us, where there are found two representations, one, 'He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth'; and the other, still more germane to the purpose of my text, 'the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . By His knowledge shall He justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.' John the Baptist, looking back through the ages to that ancient prophetic utterance, points to the young Man standing by his side, and says, 'There it is fulfilled.'

But the prophetic symbol of the Lamb, and the thought that He bore the iniquity of the many, had their roots in the past, and pointed back to the sacrificial lamb, the lamb of the daily sacrifice, and especially to the lamb slain at the Passover, which was an emblem and sacrament of deliverance from bondage. Thus the conceptions of vicarious suffering, and of a death which is a deliverance, and of blood which, sprinkled on the doorposts, guards the house from the destroying angel, are all gathered into these words.

Nor do these exhaust the sources of this figure, as it comes from the venerable and sacred past. For when we read 'the Lamb of God,' who is there that does not recognise, unless his eyes are blinded by obstinate prejudice, a glance backward to that sweet and pathetic story when the father went up with his son to the top of Mount Moriah, and to the boy's question, 'Where is the lamb?' answered, 'My son, God Himself will provide the lamb!' John says, 'Behold the Lamb that God *has* provided, the Sacrifice, on whom is laid a world's sins, and who bears them away.'

Note, too, the universality of the power of Christ's sacrificial work. John does not say 'the *sins*,' as the Litany, following an imperfect translation, makes him say. But he says, 'the *sin* of the world,' as if the whole mass of human transgression was bound together, in one black and awful bundle, and laid upon the unshrinking shoulders of this better Atlas who can bear it all, and bear it all away. Your sin, and mine, and every man's, they were all laid upon Jesus Christ.

Now remember, dear brethren, that in this wondrous representation there lie, plain and distinct, two things which to me, and I pray they may be to you, are the very foundation of the Gospel to which we have to trust. One is that on Christ Jesus, in His life and in His death, were laid the guilt and the consequences of a world's sin. I do not profess to be ready with an explanation of how that is possible. That it is a fact I believe, on the authority of Christ Himself and of Scripture; that it is inconsistent with the laws of human nature may be asserted, but never can be proved. Theories manifold have been invented in order to make it plain. I do not know that any of them have gone to the bottom of the bottomless. But

Christ in His perfect manhood, wedded, as I believe it is, to true divinity, is capable of entering into—not merely by sympathy, though that has much to do with it—such closeness of relation with human kind, and with every man, as that on Him can be laid the iniquity of us all.

Oh, brethren! what was the meaning of ‘I have a baptism to be baptized with,’ unless the cold waters of the flood into which He unshrinkingly stepped, and allowed to flow over Him, were made by the gathered accumulation of the sins of the whole world? What was the meaning of the agony in Gethsemane? What was the meaning of that most awful word ever spoken by human lips, in which the consciousness of union with, and of separation from God, were so marvellously blended, ‘My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ unless the Guiltless was then loaded with the sins of the world, which rose between Him and God?

Dear friends, it seems to me that unless this transcendent element be fairly recognised as existing in the passion and death of Jesus Christ, His demeanour when He came to die was far less heroic and noble and worthy of imitation than have been the deaths of hundreds of people who drew all their strength to die from Him. I do not venture to bring a theory, but I press upon you the fact, He bears the sins of the world, and in that awful load are yours and mine.

There is the other truth here, as clearly, and perhaps more directly, meant by the selection of the expression in my text, that the Sin-bearer not only carries, but carries *away*, the burden that is laid upon Him. Perhaps there may be a reference—in addition to the other sources of the figure which I have indicated as existing in ritual, and prophecy, and history—there

may be a reference in the words to yet another of the eloquent symbols of that ancient system which enshrined truths that were not peculiar to any people, but were the property of humanity. You remember, no doubt, the singular ceremonial connected with the scapegoat, and many of you will recall the wonderful embodiment of it given by the Christian genius of a modern painter. The sins of the nation were symbolically laid upon its head, and it was carried out to the edge of the wilderness and driven forth to wander alone, bearing away upon itself into the darkness and solitude—far from man and far from God—the whole burden of the nation's sins. Jesus Christ takes away the sin which He bears, and there is, as I believe, only one way by which individuals, or society, or the world at large, can thoroughly get rid of the guilt and penal consequences and of the dominion of sin, and that is, by beholding the Lamb of God that takes upon Himself, that He may carry away out of sight, the sin of the world. So much, then, for the first thought that I wish to suggest to you.

II. Now let me ask you to look with me at a second thought, that such a world's Sin-bearer is the world's deepest need.

The sacrifices of every land witness to the fact that humanity all over the world, and through all the ages, and under all varieties of culture, has been dimly conscious that its deepest need was that the fact of sin should be dealt with. I know that there are plenty of modern ingenious ways of explaining the universal prevalence of an altar and a sacrifice, and the slaying of innocent creatures, on other grounds, some of which I think it is not uncharitable to suppose are in favour mainly because they weaken this branch of the

evidence for the conformity of Christian truth with human necessities. But notwithstanding these, I venture to affirm, with all proper submission to wiser men, that you cannot legitimately explain the universal prevalence of sacrifice, unless you take into account as one—I should say the main—element in it, this universally diffused sense that things are wrong between man and the higher Power, and need to be set right even by such a method.

But I do not need to appeal only to this world-wide fact as being a declaration of what man's deepest need is. I would appeal to every man's own consciousness—hard though it be to get at it; buried as it is, with some of us, under mountains of indifference and neglect; and callous as it is with many of us by reason of indulgence in habits of evil. I believe that in every one of us, if we will be honest, and give heed to the inward voice, there does echo a response and an amen to the Scripture declaration, 'God hath shut up all under sin.' I ask you about yourselves, is it not so? Do you not know that, however you may gloss over the thing, or forget it amidst a whirl of engagements and occupations, or try to divert your thoughts into more or less noble or ignoble channels of pleasures and pursuits, there does lie, in each of our hearts, the sense, dormant often, but sometimes like a snake in its hibernation, waking up enough to move, and sometimes enough to sting—there does lie, in each of us, the consciousness that we are wrong with God, and need something to put us right?

And, brethren, let modern philanthropists of all sorts take this lesson: The thing that the world wants is to have sin dealt with—dealt with in the way of conscious forgiveness; dealt with in the way of drying

up its source, and delivering men from the power of it. Unless you do that, I do not say you do nothing, but you pour a bottle full of cold water into Vesuvius, and try to put the fire out with that. You may educate, you may cultivate, you may refine; you may set political and economical arrangements right in accordance with the newest notions of the century, and what then? Why! the old thing will just begin over again, and the old miseries will appear again, because the old grandmother of them all is there, the sin that has led to them.

Now do not misunderstand me, as if I were warring against good and noble men who are trying to remedy the world's evils by less thorough methods than Christ's Gospel. They will do a great deal. But you may have high education, beautiful refinement of culture and manners; you may divide out political power in accordance with the most democratic notions; you may give everybody 'a living wage,' however extravagant his notions of a living wage may be. You may carry out all these panaceas and the world will groan still, because you have not dealt with the tap-root of all the mischief. You cannot cure an internal cancer with a plaster upon the little finger, and you will never stanch the world's wounds until you go to the Physician that has balm and bandage, even Jesus Christ, that takes away the sins of the world. I profoundly distrust all these remedies for the world's misery as in themselves inadequate, even whilst I would help them all, and regard them all as then blessed and powerful, when they are consequences and secondary results of the Gospel, the first task of which is to deal by forgiveness and by cleansing with individual transgression.

And if I might venture to go a step further, I would like to say that this aspect of our Lord's work on which John the Baptist concentrated all our attention is the only one which gives Him power to sway men, and which makes the Gospel—the record of His work—the kingly power in the world that it is meant to be. Depend upon it, that in the measure in which Christian teachers fail to give supreme importance to that aspect of Christ's work they fail altogether. There are many other aspects which, as I have just said, follow in my conception from this first one; but if, as is obviously the tendency in many quarters to-day, Christianity be thought of as being mainly a means of social improvement, or if its principles of action be applied to life without that basis of them all, in the Cross which takes away the world's iniquity, then it needs no prophet to foretell that such a Christianity will only have superficial effects, and that, in losing sight of this central thought, it will have cast away all its power.

I beseech you, dear brethren, remember that Jesus Christ is something more than a social reformer, though He is the first of them, and the only one whose work will last. Jesus Christ is something more than a lovely pattern of human conduct, though He is that. Jesus Christ is something more than a great religious genius who set forth the Fatherhood of God as it had never been set forth before. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the record not only of what He said but of what He *did*, not only that He lived but that He died; and all His other powers, and all His other benefits and blessings to society, come as results of His dealing with the individual soul when He takes away its guilt and reconciles it to God.

III. And so, lastly, let me ask you to notice that this

Sin-bearer of the world is our Sin-bearer if we 'behold' Him.

John was simply summoning ignorant eyes to look, and telling of what they would see. But his call is susceptible, without violence, of a far deeper meaning. This is really the one truth that I want to press upon you, dear friends—'Behold the Lamb of God!'

What is that beholding? Surely it is nothing else than our recognising in Him the great and blessed work which I have been trying to describe, and then resting ourselves upon that great Lord and sufficient Sacrifice. And such an exercise of simple trust is well named beholding, because they who believe do see, with a deeper and a truer vision than sense can give. You and I can see Christ more really than these men who stood round Him, and to whom His flesh was 'a veil'—as the Epistle to the Hebrews calls it—hiding His true divinity and work. They who thus behold by faith lack nothing either of the directness or of the certitude that belong to vision. 'Seeing is believing,' says the cynical proverb. The Christian version inverts its terms, 'Believing is seeing.' 'Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice.'

And your simple act of 'beholding,' by the recognition of His work and the resting of yourself upon it, makes the world's Sin-bearer your Sin-bearer. You appropriate the general blessing, like a man taking in a little piece of a boundless prairie for his very own. Your possession does not make my possession of Him less, for every eye gets its own beam, and however many eyes wait upon Him, they all receive the light on to their happy eyeballs. You can make Christ your own, and have all that He has done for the world as

your possession, and can experience in your own hearts the sense of your own forgiveness and deliverance from the power and guilt of your own sin, on the simple condition of looking unto Jesus. The serpent is lifted on the pole, the dying camp cannot go to it, but the flaming eyes of the man in his last gasp may turn to the gleaming image hanging on high; and as he looks the health begins to tingle back into his veins, and he is healed.

And so, dear brethren, behold Him; for unless you do, though He has borne the world's sin, your sin will not be there, but will remain on your back to crush you down. 'O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon *me*!'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: I. JOHN AND ANDREW

'And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? 39. He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.'—JOHN i. 37-39.

IN these verses we see the head waters of a great river, for we have before us nothing less than the beginnings of the Christian Church. So simply were the first disciples made. The great society of believers was born like its Master, unostentatiously and in a corner.

Jesus has come back from His conflict in the wilderness after His baptism, and has presented Himself before John the Baptist for his final attestation. It was a great historical moment when the last of the Prophets stood face to face with the Fulfilment of all prophecy. In his words, 'Behold the Lamb of God

which taketh away the sin of the world!’ Jewish prophecy sang its swan-song, uttered its last rejoicing, ‘Eureka! I have found Him!’ and died as it spoke.

We do not sufficiently estimate the magnificent self-suppression and unselfishness of the Baptist, in that he, with his own lips, here repeats his testimony in order to point his disciples away from himself, and to attach them to Jesus. If he could have been touched by envy he would not so gladly have recognised it as his lot to decrease while Jesus increased. Rare magnanimity that in a teacher! The two who hear John’s words are Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, and an anonymous man. The latter is probably the Evangelist. For it is remarkable that we never find the names of James and John in this Gospel (though from the other Gospels we know how closely they were associated with our Lord), and that we only find them referred to as ‘the sons of Zebedee,’ once near the close of the book. That fact points, I think, in the direction of John’s authorship of this Gospel.

These two, then, follow behind Jesus, fancying themselves unobserved, not desiring to speak to Him, and probably with some notion of tracking Him to His home, in order that they may seek an interview at a later period. But He who notices the first beginnings of return to Him, and always comes to meet men, and is better to them than their wishes, will not let them steal behind Him uncheered, nor leave them to struggle with diffidence and delay. So He turns to them, and the events ensue which I have read in the verses that follow as my text.

We have, I think, three things especially to notice here. First, the Master’s question to the whole world, ‘What seek ye?’ Second, the Master’s invitation to

the whole world, 'Come and see!' Lastly, the personal communion which brings men's hearts to Him, 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day.'

I. So, then, first look at this question of Christ to the whole world, 'What seek ye?'

As it stands, on its surface, and in its primary application, it is the most natural of questions. Our Lord hears footsteps behind Him, and, as any one would do, turns about, with the question which any one would ask, 'What is it that you want?' That question would derive all its meaning from the look with which it was accompanied, and the tone in which it was spoken. It might mean either annoyance and rude repulsion of a request, even before it was presented, or it might mean a glad wish to draw out the petition, and more than half a pledge to bestow it. All depends on the smile with which it was asked and the intonation of voice which carried it to their ears. And if we had been there we should have felt, as these two evidently felt, that though in form a question, it was in reality a promise, and that it drew out their shy wishes, made them conscious to themselves of what they desired, and gave them confidence that their desire would be granted. Clearly it had sunk very deep into the Evangelist's mind; and now, at the end of his life, when his course is nearly run, the never-to-be-forgotten voice sounds still in his memory, and he sees again, in sunny clearness, all the scene that had transpired on that day by the fords of the Jordan. The first words and the last words of those whom we have learned to love are cut deep on our hearts.

It was not an accident that the first words which the Master spoke in His Messianic office were this pro-

foundly significant question, 'What seek ye?' He asks it of us all, He asks it of us to-day. Well for them who can answer, 'Rabbi! where dwellest *Thou*?' 'It is Thou whom we seek!' So, venturing to take the words in that somewhat wider application, let me just suggest to you two or three directions in which they seem to point.

First, the question suggests to us this: the need of having a clear consciousness of what is our object in life. The most of men have never answered that question. They live from hand to mouth, driven by circumstances, guided by accidents, impelled by unreflecting passions and desires, knowing what they want for the moment, but never having tried to shape the course of their lives into a consistent whole, so as to stand up before God in Christ when He puts the question to them, 'What seek ye?' and to answer the question.

These incoherent, instinctive, unreflective lives that so many of you are living are a shame to your manhood, to say nothing more. God has made us for something else than that we should thus be the sport of circumstances. It is a disgrace to any of us that our lives should be like some little fishing-boat, with an unskilful or feeble hand at the tiller, yawing from one point of the compass to another, and not keeping a straight and direct course. I pray you, dear brethren, to front this question: 'After all, and at bottom, what is it I am living for? Can I formulate the aims and purposes of my life in any intelligible statement of which I should not be ashamed?' Some of you are not ashamed to *do* what you would be very much ashamed to say, and you practically answer the question, 'What are you seeking?' by pursuits that you durst not call by their own ugly names.

There may be many of us who are living for our lusts, for our passions, for our ambitions, for avarice, who are living in all uncleanness and godlessness. I do not know. There are plenty of shabby, low aims in all of us which do not bear being dragged out into the light of day. I beseech you to try and get hold of the ugly things and bring them up to the surface, however much they may seek to hide in the congenial obscurity and twist their slimy coils round something in the dark. If you dare not put your life's object into words, bethink yourselves whether it ought to be your life's object at all.

Ah, brethren! if we would ask ourselves this question, and answer it with any thoroughness, we should not make so many mistakes as to the places where we look for the things for which we are seeking. If we knew what we were really seeking, we should know where to go to look for it. Let me tell you what you are seeking, whether you know it or not. You are seeking for rest for your heart, a home for your spirits; you are seeking for perfect truth for your understandings, perfect beauty for your affections, perfect goodness for your conscience. You are seeking for all these three, gathered into one white beam of light, and you are seeking for it all in a Person. Many of you do not know this, and so you go hunting in all manner of impossible places for that which you can only find in one. To the question, 'What seek ye?' the deepest of all answers, the only real answer, is, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' If you know that, you know where to look for what you need! 'Do men gather grapes of thorns?' If these are really the things that you are seeking after, in all your mistaken search—oh! how mistaken is the search! Do men

look for pearls in cockle-shells, or for gold in coal-pits; and why should you look for rest of heart, mind, conscience, spirit, anywhere and in anything short of God? 'What seek ye?'—the only answer is, 'We seek *Thee!*'

And then, still further, let me remind you how these words are not only a question, but are really a veiled and implied promise. The question, 'What do you want of Me?' may either strike an intending suppliant like a blow, and drive him away with his prayer sticking in his throat unspoken, or it may sound like a merciful invitation, 'What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be granted unto thee?' We know which of the two it was here. Christ asks all such questions as this (and there are many of them in the New Testament), not for His information, but for our strengthening. He asks people, not because He does not know before they answer, but that, on the one hand, their own minds may be clear as to their wishes, and so they may wish the more earnestly because of the clearness; and that, on the other hand, their desires being expressed, they may be the more able to receive the gift which He is willing to bestow. So He here turns to these men, whose purpose He knew well enough, and says to them, 'What seek ye? Herein He is doing the very same thing on a lower level, and in an outer sphere, as is done when He appoints that we shall pray for the blessings which He is yearning to bestow, but which He makes conditional on our supplications, only because by these supplications our hearts are opened to a capacity for receiving them.

We have, then, in the words before us, thus understood, our Lord's gracious promise to give what is

desired on the simple condition that the suppliant is conscious of his own wants, and turns to Him for the supply of them. 'What seek ye?' It is a blank cheque that He puts into their hands to fill up. It is the key of His treasure-house which He offers to us all, with the assured confidence that if we open it we shall find all that we need.

Who is He that thus stands up before a whole world of seeking, restless spirits, and fronts them with the question which is a pledge, conscious of His capacity to give to each of them what each of them requires? Who is this that professes to be able to give all these men and women and children bread here in the wilderness? There is only one answer—the Christ of God.

And He has done what He promises. No man or woman ever went to Him, and answered this question, and presented their petition for any real good, and was refused. No man can ask from Christ what Christ cannot bestow. No man can ask from Christ what Christ will not bestow. In the loftiest region, the region of inward and spiritual gifts, which are the best gifts, we can get everything that we want, and our only limit is, not His boundless omnipotence and willingness, but our own poor, narrow, and shrivelled desires. 'Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find.'

Christ stands before us, if I may so say, like some of those fountains erected at some great national festival, out of which pour for all the multitude every variety of draught which they desire, and each man that goes with his empty cup gets it filled, and gets it filled with that which he wishes. 'What seek ye?' Wisdom? You students, you thinkers, you young men that are

fighting with intellectual difficulties and perplexities, 'What seek ye?' Truth? He gives us that. You others, 'What seek ye?' Love, peace, victory, self-control, hope, anodyne for sorrow? Whatever you desire, you will find in Jesus Christ. The first words with which He broke the silence when He spake to men as the Messias, were at once a searching question, probing their aims and purposes, and a gracious promise pledging Him to a task not beyond His power, however far beyond that of all others, even the task of giving to each man his heart's desire. 'What seek ye?' 'Seek, and ye shall find.'

II. Then, still further, notice how, in a similar fashion, we may regard here the second words which our Lord speaks as being His merciful invitation to the world. 'Come and see.'

The disciples' answer was simple and timid. They did not venture to say, 'May we talk to you?' 'Will you take us to be your disciples?' All they can muster courage to ask now is, 'Where dwellest Thou?' At another time, perhaps, we will go to this Rabbi and speak with Him. His answer is, 'Come, come now; come, and by intercourse with Me learn to know Me.' His temporary home was probably nothing more than some selected place on the river's bank, for 'He had not where to lay His head'; but such as it was, He welcomes them to it. 'Come and see!'

Take a plain, simple truth out of that. Christ is always glad when people resort to Him. When He was here in the world, no hour was inconvenient or inopportune; no moment was too much occupied; no physical wants of hunger, or thirst, or slumber were ever permitted to come between Him and seeking hearts. He was never impatient. He was never wearied

of speaking, though He was often wearied in speaking. He never denied Himself to any one or said, 'I have something else to do than to attend to you.' And just as in literal fact, whilst He was here upon earth, nothing was ever permitted to hinder His drawing near to any man who wanted to draw near to Him, so nothing now hinders it; and He is glad when any of us resort to Him and ask Him to let us speak to Him and be with Him. His weariness or occupation never shut men out from Him then. His glory does not shut them out now.

Then there is another thought here. This invitation of the Master is also a very distinct call to a first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ. Andrew and John had heard from the Baptist about Him, and now what He bids them to do is to come and hear Himself. That is what He calls you, dear brethren, to do. Do not listen to us, let the Master Himself speak to you. Many who reject Christianity reject it through not having listened to Jesus Himself teaching them, but only to theologians and other human representations of the truth. Go and ask Christ to speak to you with His own lips of truth, and take Him as the Expositor of His own system. Do not be contented with traditional talk and second-hand information. Go to Christ, and hear what He Himself has to say to you.

Then, still further, in this 'Come and see' there is a distinct call to the personal act of faith. Both of these words, '*come*' and '*see*,' are used in the New Testament as standing emblems of faith. Coming to Christ is trusting Him; trusting Him is seeing Him, looking unto Him. 'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest,' 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.' There are two metaphors, both of them

pointing to one thing, and that one thing is the invitation from the dear lips of the loving Lord to every man, woman, and child in this congregation. 'Come and see!' 'Put your trust in Me, draw near to Me by desire and penitence, draw near to Me in the fixed thought of your mind, in the devotion of your will, in the trust of your whole being. Come to Me, and see Me by faith; and then—and then—your hearts will have found what they seek, and your weary quest will be over, and, like the dove, you will fold your wings and nestle at the foot of the Cross, and rest for evermore. Come! "Come and see!"'

III. So, lastly, we have in these words a parable of the blessed experience which binds men's hearts to Jesus for ever. 'They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.'

'Dwelt' and 'abode' are the same words in the original. It is one of John's favourite words, and in its deepest meaning expresses the close, still communion which the soul may have with Jesus Christ, which communion, on that never-to-be-forgotten day, when he and Andrew sat with Him in the quiet, confidential fellowship that disclosed Christ's glory 'full of grace and truth' to their hearts, made them His for ever.

If the reckoning of time here is made according to the Hebrew fashion, the 'tenth hour' will be ten o'clock in the morning. So, one long day of talk! If it be according to the Roman legal fashion, the hour will be four o'clock in the afternoon, which would only give time for a brief conversation before the night fell. But, in any case, sacred reserve is observed as to what passed in that interview. A lesson for a great deal of

blatant talk, in this present day, about conversion and the details thereof!

‘Not easily forgiven
Are those, who setting wide the doors, that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
Let in the day.’

John had nothing to say to the world about what the Master said to him and his brother in that long day of communion.

One plain conclusion from this last part of our narrative is that the impression of Christ's own personality is the strongest force to make disciples. The character of Jesus Christ is, after all, the central and standing evidence and the mightiest credential of Christianity. It bears upon its face the proof of its own truthfulness. If such a character was not lived, how did it ever come to be described, and described by such people? And if it was lived, how did it come to be so? The historical veracity of the character of Jesus Christ is guaranteed by its very uniqueness. And the divine origin of Jesus Christ is forced upon us as the only adequate explanation of His historical character. ‘Truly this man was the Son of God.’

I believe that to lift Him up is the work of all Christian preachers and teachers; as far as they can to hide themselves behind Jesus Christ, or at the most to let themselves appear, just as the old painters used to let their own likenesses appear in their great altar-pieces—a little kneeling figure there, away in a dark corner of the background. Present Christ, and He will vindicate His own character; He will vindicate His own nature; He will vindicate His own gospel. ‘They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him,’ and the

end of it was that they abode with Him for evermore. And so it will always be.

Once more, personal experience of the grace and sweetness of this Saviour binds men to Him as nothing else will :

‘He must be loved ere that to you
He will seem worthy of your love.’

The deepest and sweetest and most precious part of His character and of His gifts can only be known on condition of possessing Him and them, and they can be possessed only on condition of holding fellowship with Him. I do not say to any man : ‘Try trust in order to be sure that Jesus Christ is worthy to be trusted,’ for by its very nature faith cannot be an experiment or provisional. I do not say that my experience is evidence to you, but at the same time I do say that it is worth any man’s while to reflect upon this, that none who ever trusted in Him have been put to shame. No man has looked to Jesus and has said : ‘Ah ! I have found Him out ! His help is vain, His promises empty.’ Many men have fallen away from Him, I know, but not because they have proved Him untruthful, but because they have become unfaithful.

And so, dear brethren, I come to you with the old message, ‘Oh ! taste,’ and thus you will ‘see that the Lord is good.’ There must be the faith first, and then there will be the experience, which will make anything seem to you more credible than that He whom you have loved and trusted, and who has answered your love and your trust, should be anything else than the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind. Come to Him and you will see. The impregnable argument will be put into your mouth—‘Whether this man be a sinner or no, I

know not. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.' Look to Him, listen to Him, and when He asks you, 'What seek ye?' answer, 'Rabbi, where dwellest Thou? It is Thou whom I seek.' He will welcome you to close blessed intercourse with Him, which will knit you to Him with cords that cannot be broken, and with His loving voice making music in memory and heart, you will be able triumphantly to confess—'Now we believe, not because of any man's saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: II. SIMON PETER

'One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.' —JOHN i. 40-42.

THERE are many ways by which souls are brought to their Saviour. Sometimes, like the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, men seek Him earnestly and find Him. Sometimes, by the intervention of another, the knowledge of Him is kindled in dark hearts. Sometimes He Himself takes the initiative, and finds those that seek Him not. We have illustrations of all these various ways in these simple records of the gathering in of the first disciples. Andrew and his friend, with whom we were occupied in our last sermon, looked for Christ and found Him. Peter, with whom we have to do now, was brought to Christ by his brother; and the third of the group, consisting of Philip, was sought by Christ while he was not thinking of Him, and found

an unsought treasure; and then Philip again, like Andrew, finds a friend, and brings him to Christ.

Each of the incidents has its own lesson, and each of them adds something to the elucidation of John's two great subjects: the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, and the development of that faith in Him which gives us life. It may be profitable to consider each group in succession, and mark the various aspects of these two subjects presented by each.

In this incident, then, we have two things mainly to consider: first, the witness of the disciple; second, the self-revelation of the Master.

I. The witness of the disciple.

We have seen that the unknown companion of Andrew was probably the Evangelist himself, who, in accordance with his uniform habit, suppresses his own name, and that that omission points to John's authorship of this Gospel. Another morsel of evidence as to the date and purpose of the Gospel lies in the mention here of Andrew as 'Simon Peter's brother.' We have not yet heard anything about Simon Peter. The Evangelist has never mentioned his name, and yet he takes it for granted that his hearers knew all about Peter, and knew him better than they did Andrew. That presupposes a considerable familiarity with the incidents of the Gospel story, and is in harmony with the theory that this fourth Gospel is the latest of the four, and was written for the purpose of supplementing, not of repeating, their narrative. Hence a number of the phenomena of the Gospel, which have troubled critics, are simply and sufficiently explained.

But that by the way. Passing that, notice first the illustration that we get here of how instinctive and natural the impulse is, when a man has found Jesus

Christ, to tell some one else about Him. Nobody said to Andrew, 'Go and look for your brother,' and yet, as soon as he had fairly realised the fact that this Man standing before him was the Messiah, though the evening seems to have come, he hurries away to find his brother, and share with him the glad conviction.

Now, that is always the case. If a man has any real depth of conviction, he cannot rest till he tries to share it with somebody else. Why, even a dog that has had its leg mended, will bring other limping dogs to the man that was kind to it. Whoever really believes anything becomes a propagandist.

Look round about us to-day! and hearken to the Babel, the wholesale Babel of noises, where every sort of opinion is trying to make itself heard. It sounds like a country fair where every huckster is shouting his loudest. That shows that the men believe the things that they profess. Thank God that there is so much earnestness in the world! And now are Christians to be dumb whilst all this vociferous crowd is calling its wares, and quacks are standing on their platforms shouting out their specifics, which are mostly delusions? Have you not a medicine that will cure everything, a real heal-all, a veritable pain-killer? If you believe that you have, certainly you will never rest till you share your boon with your brethren.

If the natural effect of all earnest conviction, viz. a yearning and an absolute necessity to speak it out, is no part of your Christian experience, very grave inferences ought to be drawn from that. This man, before he was four-and-twenty hours a disciple, had made another. Some of you have been disciples for as many years, and have never even tried to make one.

Whence comes that silence which is, alas, so common among us?

It is very plain that, making all allowance for changed manners, for social difficulties, for timidity, for the embarrassment that besets people when they talk to other people about religion, which is 'such an awkward subject to introduce into mixed company,' and the like,—making all allowance for these, there is a deplorable number of Christian people who ought to be, in their own circles, evangelists and missionaries, who are, if I may venture to quote very rude words which the Bible uses, 'Dumb dogs lying down, and loving to slumber.' 'He first findeth his own brother, Simon!'

Now, take another lesson out of this witness of the disciple, as to the channel in which such effort naturally runs. 'He *first* findeth *his own brother*'; does not that imply a second finding by the other of the two? The language of the text suggests that the Evangelist's tendency to the suppression of himself, of which I have spoken, hides away, if I may so say, in this singular expression, the fact that he too went to look for a brother, but that Andrew found his brother before John found his. If so, each of the original pair of disciples went to look for one who was knit to him by close ties of kindred and affection, and found him and brought him to Christ; and before the day was over the Christian Church was doubled, because each member of it, by God's grace, had added another. Home, then, and those who are nearest to us, present the natural channels for Christian work. Many a very earnest and busy preacher, or Sunday-school teacher, or missionary, has brothers and sisters, husband or wife, children or parents at home to whom he has

never said a word about Christ. There is an old proverb, 'The shoemaker's wife is always the worst shod.' The families of many very busy Christian teachers suffer wofully for want of remembering 'he first findeth his own brother.' It is a poor affair if all your philanthropy and Christian energy go off noisily in Sunday-schools and mission-stations, and if your own vineyard is neglected, and the people at your own fire-side never hear anything from you about the Master whom you say you love. Some of you want that hint; will you take it?

But then, the principle is one that might be fairly expanded beyond the home circle. The natural relationships into which we are brought by neighbourhood and by ordinary associations prescribe the direction of our efforts. What, for instance, are we set down in this swarming population of Lancashire for? For business and personal ends? Yes, partly. But is that all? Surely, if we believe that 'there is a divinity that shapes our ends' and determines the bounds of our habitation, we must believe that other purposes affecting other people are also meant by God to be accomplished through us, and that where a man who knows and loves Christ Jesus is brought into neighbourly contact with thousands who do not, he is thereby constituted his brethren's keeper, and is as plainly called to tell them of Christ as if a voice from Heaven had bid him do it. What is to be said of the depth and vital energy of the Christianity that neither hears the call nor feels the impulse to share its blessing with the famishing Lazarus at its gate? What will be the fate of such a church? Why, if you live in luxury in your own well drained and ventilated house, and take no heed to the typhoid fever or cholera in the slums at

its back, the chances are that seeds of the disease will find their way to you, and kill your wife, or child, or yourself. And if you Christian people, living in the midst of godless people, do not try to heal them, they will infect you. If you do not seek to impress your conviction that Christ is the Messiah upon an unbelieving generation, the unbelieving generation will impress upon you its doubts whether He is; and your lips will falter, and a pallor will come over the complexion of your love, and your faith will become congealed and turn into ice.

Notice again the simple word which is the most powerful means of influencing most men.

Andrew did not begin to argue with his brother. Some of us can do that and some of us cannot. Some of us are influenced by argument and some of us are not. You may pound a man's mistaken creed to atoms with sledge-hammers of reasoning, and he is not much the nearer being a Christian than he was before; just as you may pound ice to pieces and it is pounded ice after all. The mightiest argument that we can use, and the argument that we can all use, if we have got any religion in us at all, is that of Andrew, 'We have found the Messias.'

I recently read a story in some newspaper or other about a minister who preached a very elaborate course of lectures in refutation of some form of infidelity, for the special benefit of a man that attended his place of worship. Soon after, the man came and declared himself a Christian. The minister said to him, 'Which of my discourses was it that removed your doubts?' The reply was, 'Oh! it was not any of your sermons that influenced me. The thing that set me thinking was that a poor woman

came out of the chapel beside me, and stumbled on the steps, and I stretched out my hand to help her, and she said "Thank you!" Then she looked at me and said, "Do you love Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour?" And I did not, and I went home and thought about it; and now I can say *I love Jesus.*' The poor woman's word, and her frank confession of her experience, were all the transforming power.

If you have found Christ, you can say that you have. Never mind about the how! Any how! Only say it! A boy that is sent on an errand by his father has only one duty to perform, and that is to repeat what he was told. Whether we have any eloquence or not, whether we have any logic or not, whether we can speak persuasively and gracefully or not, if we have laid hold of Christ at all we can say that we have; and it is at our peril that we do not. We can say it to somebody. There is surely some one who will listen to you more readily than to any one else. Surely you have not lived all your life and bound nobody to you by kindness and love, so that they will gladly attend to what you say. Well, then, *use* the power that is given to you.

Remember the beginnings of the Christian Church—two men, each of whom found his brother. Two and two make four; and if every one of us would go, according to the old law of warfare, and each of us slay our man, or rather each of us give life by God's grace to some one, or try to do it, our congregations and our churches would grow as fast as, according to the old problem, the money grew that was paid down for the nails in the horse's shoes. Two snowflakes on the top of a mountain gather an avalanche by the time

they reach the valley. 'He first findeth his brother, Simon.'

II. And now I turn to the second part of this text, the self-revelation of the Master.

The bond which knit these men to Christ at first was by no means the perfect Christian faith which they afterwards attained. They recognised Him as the Messiah, they were personally attached to Him, they were ready to accept His teaching and to obey His commandments. That was about as far as they had gone. But they were scholars. They had entered the school. The rest would come. It would be absurd to expect that Christ would begin by preaching to them faith in His divinity and atoning work. He binds them to *Himself*. That is lesson enough for a beginner for one day.

It was the impression which Christ Himself made on Simon which completed the work begun by his brother. What, then, was the impression? He comes all full of wonder and awe, and he is met by a look and a sentence. The look, which is described by an unusual word, was a penetrating gaze which regarded Peter with fixed attention. It must have been remarkable, to have lived in John's memory for all these years. Evidently, as I think, a more than natural insight is implied. So, also, the saying with which our Lord received Peter seems to me to be meant to show more than natural knowledge: 'Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas.' Christ may, no doubt, have learned the Apostle's name and lineage from his brother, or in some other ordinary way. But if you observe the similar incident which follows in the conversation with Nicodemus, and the emphatic declaration of the next chapter that Jesus knew both 'all men,' and 'what

was in man'—both human nature as a whole, and each individual—it is more natural to see here superhuman knowledge.

So then, the first point in our Lord's self-revelation here is that He shows Himself possessed of supernatural and thorough knowledge. One remembers the many instances where our Lord read men's hearts, and the prayer addressed to Him probably, by Peter, 'Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men,' and the vision which John saw of 'eyes like a flame of fire,' and the sevenfold 'I know thy works.'

It may be a very awful thought, 'Thou, God, seest me.' It is a very unwelcome thought to a great many men, and it will be so to us unless we can give it the modification which it receives from the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and feel sure that the eyes which are blazing with divine omniscience are dewy with divine and human love.

Do you believe it? Do you feel that Christ is looking at you, and searching you altogether? Do you rejoice in it? Do you carry it about with you as a consolation and a strength in moments of weakness and in times of temptation? Is it as blessed to you to feel 'Thou Christ beholdest me now,' as it is for a child to feel that, when it is playing in the garden, its mother is sitting up at the window watching it, and that no harm can come? There have been men driven mad in prisons because they knew that somewhere in the wall there was a little pinhole, through which a gaoler's eye was always, or might be always, glaring down at them. And the thought of an absolute Omniscience up there, searching me to the depths of my nature, may become one from which I recoil shudderingly, and will not be altogether a blessed one unless it comes

to me in this shape:—‘My Christ knows me altogether and loves me better than He knows. And so I will spread myself out before Him, and though I feel that there is much in me which I dare not tell to men, I will rejoice that there is nothing which I need to tell to Him. He knows me through and through. He knew me when He died for me. He knew me when He forgave me. He knew me when He undertook to cleanse me. Like this very Peter I will say, “Lord, Thou knowest all things,” and, like him, I will cling the closer to His feet, because I know, and He knows, my weakness and my sin.’

Another revelation of our Lord’s relation to His disciples is given in the fact that He changes Simon’s name. Jehovah, in the Old Testament, changes the names of Abraham and of Jacob. Babylonian kings in the Old Testament change the names of their vassal princes. Masters impose names on their slaves; and I suppose that even the marriage custom of the wife’s assuming the name of the husband rests originally upon the same idea of absolute authority. That idea is conveyed in the fact that our Lord changes Peter’s name, and so takes absolute possession of him, and asserts His mastery over him. We belong to Him altogether, because He has given Himself altogether for us. His absolute authority is the correlative of His utter self-surrender. He who can come to me and say, ‘I have spared not my life for thee,’ and He only, has the right to come to me and say, ‘yield yourself wholly to Me.’ So, Christian friends, your Master wants all your service; do you give yourselves up to Him out and out, not by half and half.

Lastly, that change of name implies Christ’s power and promise to bestow a new character and new

functions and honours. Peter was by no means a 'Peter' then. The name no doubt mainly implies official function, but that official function was prepared for by personal character; and in so far as the name refers to character, it means firmness. At that epoch Peter was rash, impulsive, headstrong, self-confident, vain, and therefore, necessarily changeable. Like the granite, all fluid and hot, and fluid because it was hot, he needed to cool in order to solidify into rock. And not until his self-confidence had been knocked out of him, and he had learned humility by falling; not until he had been beaten from all his presumption, and tamed down, and sobered and steadied by years of difficulty and responsibilities, did he become the rock that Christ meant him to be. All *that* lay concealed in the future, but in the change of his name, while he stood on the very threshold of his Christian career, there was preached to him, and there is preached to us, this great truth, that if you will go to Jesus Christ He will make a new man of you. No man's character is so obstinately rooted in evil but that Christ can change its set and direction. No man's natural dispositions are so faulty and low but that Christ can develop counterbalancing virtues, and out of the evil and weakness make strength. He will not make a Peter into a John, or a John into a Paul, but He will deliver Peter from the 'defects of his qualities,' and lead them up into a higher and a nobler region. There are no outcasts in the view of the transforming Christ. He dismisses no people out of His hospital as incurable, because anybody, everybody, the blackest, the most rooted in evil, those who have longest indulged in any given form of transgression, may all come to Him; with the certainty

that if they will cleave to Him, He will read all their character and all its weaknesses, and then with a glad smile of welcome and assured confidence on His face, will ensure to them a new nature and new dignities. 'Thou art Simon—thou shalt be Peter.'

The process will be long. It will be painful. There will be a great deal pared off. The sculptor makes the marble image by chipping away the superfluous marble. Ah! and when you have to chip away superfluous flesh and blood it is bitter work, and the chisel is often deeply dyed in gore, and the mallet seems to be very cruel. Simon did not know all that had to be done to make a Peter of him. We have to thank God's providence that we do not know all the sorrows and trials of the process of making us what He wills us to be. But we may be sure of this, that if only we keep near our Master, and let Him have His way with us, and work His will upon us, and if only we will not wince from the blows of the Great Artist's chisel, then out of the roughest block He will carve the fairest statue; and He will fulfil for us at last His great promise: 'I will give unto him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: III. PHILIP

'The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.'—JOHN i. 43.

'THE day following'—we have a diary in this chapter and the next, extending from the day when John the

Baptist gives his official testimony to Jesus, up till our Lord's first journey to Jerusalem. The order of events is this. The deputation from the Sanhedrim to John occupied the first day. On the second Jesus comes back to John after His temptation, and receives his solemn attestation. On the third day, John repeats his testimony, and three disciples, probably four, make the nucleus of the Church. These are the two pairs of brothers, James and John, Andrew and Peter, who stand first in every catalogue of the Apostles, and were evidently nearest to Christ.

'The day following' of our text is the fourth day. On it our Lord determines to return to Galilee. His objects in His visit to John were accomplished—to receive his public attestation, and to gather the first little knot of His followers. Thus launched upon His course, He desired to return to His native district.

These events had occurred where John was baptising, in a place called in the English version Bethabara, which means 'The house of crossing,' or as we might say, Ferry-house. The traditional site for John's baptism is near Jericho, but the next chapter (verse i.) shows that it was only a day's journey from Cana of Galilee, and must therefore have been much further north than Jericho. A ford, still bearing the name Abarah, a few miles south of the lake of Gennesaret, has lately been discovered. Our Lord, then, and His disciples had a day's walking to take them back to Galilee. But apparently before they set out on that morning, Philip and Nathanael were added to the little band. So these two days saw six disciples gathered round Jesus.

Andrew and John sought Christ and found Him. To them He revealed Himself as very willing to be

approached, and glad to welcome any to His side. Peter, who comes next, was brought to Christ by his brother, and to him Christ revealed Himself as reading his heart, and promising and giving him higher functions and a more noble character.

Now we come to the third case, 'Jesus findeth Philip,' who was not seeking Jesus, and who was brought by no one. To him Christ reveals Himself as drawing near to many a heart that has not thought of Him, and laying a masterful hand of gracious authority on the springs of life and character in that autocratic word 'Follow Me.' So we have a gradually heightening revelation of the Master's graciousness to all souls, to them that seek and to them that seek Him not. It is only to the working out of these simple thoughts that I ask your attention now.

I. First, then, let us deal with the revelation that is given us here of the seeking Christ.

Every one who reads this chapter with even the slightest attention must observe how 'seeking' and 'finding' are repeated over and over again. Christ turns to Andrew and John with the question, 'What seek ye?' Andrew, as the narrative says, '*findeth* his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, "We have *found* the Messiah!"' Then again, Jesus *finds* Philip; and again, Philip, as soon as he has been won to Jesus, goes off to *find* Nathanael; and his glad word to him is, once more, 'We have *found* the Messiah.' It is a reciprocal play of finding and seeking all through these verses.

There are two kinds of finding. There is a casual stumbling upon a thing that you were not looking for, and there is a finding as the result of seeking. It is the latter which is here. Christ did not casually stumble

upon Philip, upon that morning, before they departed from the fords of the Jordan on their short journey to Cana of Galilee. He went to look for this other Galilean, one who was connected with Andrew and Peter, a native of the same little village. He went and found him; and whilst Philip was all unexpectant and undesirous, the Master came to him and laid His hand upon him, and drew him to Himself.

Now that is what Christ often does. There are men like the merchantman who went all over the world seeking goodly pearls, who with some eager longing to possess light, or truth, or goodness, or rest, search up and down and find it nowhere, because they are looking for it in a hundred different places. They are expecting to find a little here and a little there, and to piece all together to make of the fragments one all-sufficing restfulness. Then when they are most eager in their search, or when, perhaps, it has all died down into despair and apathy, the veil seems to be withdrawn, and they see Him whom they have been seeking all the time and knew not that He was there beside them. All, and more than all, that they sought for in the many pearls is stored for them in the one Pearl of great price. The ancient covenant stands firm to-day as for ever. 'Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

But then there are others, like Paul on the road to Damascus or like Matthew the publican, sitting at the receipt of custom, on whom there is laid a sudden hand, to whom there comes a sudden conviction, on whose eyes, not looking to the East, there dawns the light of Christ's presence. Such cases occur all through the ages, for He is not to be confined, bless His name! within the narrow limits of answering seeking souls,

or of showing Himself to people that are brought to Him by human instrumentality; but far beyond these bounds He goes, and many a time discloses His beauty and His sweetness to hearts that wist not of Him, and who can only say, 'Lo! God was in this place, and I knew it not.' 'Thou wast found of them that sought Thee not.'

As it was in His miracles upon earth, so it has been in the sweet and gracious works of His grace ever since. Sometimes He healed in response to the yearning desire that looked out of sick eyes, or that spoke from parched lips, and no man that ever came to Him and said 'Heal me!' was sent away beggared of His blessing. Sometimes He healed in response to the beseeching of those who, with loving hearts, carried their dear ones and laid them at His feet. But sometimes, to magnify the spontaneity and the completeness of His own love, and to show us that He is bound and limited by no human co-operation, and that He is His own motive, He reached out the blessing to a hand that was not extended to grasp it; and by His question, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' kindled desires that else had lain dormant for ever.

And so in this story before us; He will welcome and over-answer Andrew and John when they come seeking; He will turn round to them with a smile on His face, that converts the question, 'What seek ye?' into an invitation, 'Come and see.' And when Andrew brings his brother to Him, He will go more than half-way to meet him. But when these are won, there still remains another way by which He will have disciples brought into His Kingdom, and that is by Himself going out and laying His hand on the man and drawing him to His heart by the revelation of His love.

But further, and in a deeper sense, He really seeks us all, and, unasked, bestows His love upon us.

Whether we seek Him or no, there is no heart upon earth which Christ does not desire; and no man or woman within the sound of His gospel whom He is not in a very real sense seeking that He may draw them to Himself. His own word is a wonderful one: 'The Father *seeketh* such to worship Him'; as if God went all up and down the world looking for hearts to love Him and to turn to Him with reverent thankfulness. And as the Father, so the Son—who is for us the revelation of the Father: 'The Son of Man is come to *seek* and to save that which was lost.' No one on earth wanted Him, or dreamed of His coming. When He bowed the heavens and gathered Himself into the narrow space of the manger in Bethlehem, and took upon Him the limitations and the burdens and the weaknesses of manhood, it was not in response to any petition, it was in reply to no seeking; but He came spontaneously, unmoved, obeying but the impulse of His own heart, and because He would have mercy. He who is the Beginning, and will be First in all things, was first in this, that before they called He answered, and came upon earth unbesought and unexpected, because His own infinite love brought Him hither. Christ's mercy to a world does not come like water in a well that has to be pumped up, by our petitions, by our search, but like water in some fountain, rising sparkling into the sunlight by its own inward impulse. He is His own motive; and came to a forgetful and careless world, like a shepherd who goes after his flock in the wilderness, not because they bleat for him, while they crop the herbage which tempts them ever further from the fold and remember him and it no

more, but because he cannot have them lost. Men are not conscious of needing Christ till He comes. The supply creates the demand. He is like the 'dew which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.'

But not only does Christ seek us all, inasmuch as the whole conception and execution of His great work are independent of man's desires, but He seeks us each in a thousand ways. He longs to have each of us for His disciples. He seeks each of us for His disciples, by the motion of His Spirit on our spirits, by stirring conviction in our consciences, by pricking us often with a sense of our own evil, by all our restlessness and dissatisfaction, by the disappointments and the losses, as by the brightnesses and the goodness of earthly providences, and often through such agencies as my lips and the lips of other men. The Master Himself, who seeks all mankind, has sought and is seeking you at this moment. Oh! yield to His search. The shepherd goes out on the mountain side, for all the storm and the snow, and wades knee-deep through the drifts until he finds the sheep. And your Shepherd, who is also your Brother, has come looking for you, and at this moment is putting out His hand and laying hold of some of you through my poor words, and saying to you, as He said to Philip, 'Follow Me!'

II. And now let us next consider that word of authority which, spoken to the one man in our text, is really spoken to us all.

'Jesus findeth Philip, and saith unto him, "Follow Me!"' No doubt a great deal more passed, but no doubt what more passed was less significant and less important for the development of faith in this man than what is recorded. The word of authority, the invitation which was a demand, the demand which was an invita-

tion, and the personal impression which He produced upon Philip's heart, were the things that bound him to Jesus Christ for ever. 'Follow Me,' spoken at the beginning of the journey of Christ and His disciples back to Galilee, might have meant merely, on the surface, 'Come back with us.' But the words have, of course, a much deeper meaning. They mean—be My disciple. Think what is implied in them, and ask yourself whether the demand that Christ makes in these words is an unreasonable one, and then ask yourselves whether you have yielded to it or not.

We lose the force of the image by much repetition. Sheep follow a shepherd. Travellers follow a guide. Here is a man upon some dangerous cornice of the Alps, with a ledge of limestone as broad as the palm of your hand, and perhaps a couple of feet of snow above that, for him to walk upon, a precipice on either side; and his guide says, as he ropes himself to him, 'Now, tread where I tread!' Travellers follow their guides. Soldiers follow their commanders. There is the hell of the battlefield; here a line of wavering, timid, raw recruits. Their commander rushes to the front and throws himself upon the advancing enemy with the one word, 'Follow,' and the coward becomes a hero. Soldiers follow their captains. Your Shepherd comes to you and calls, 'Follow Me.' Your Captain and Commander comes to you and calls, 'Follow Me.' In all the dreary wilderness, in all the difficult contingencies and conjunctions, in all the conflicts of life, this Man strides in front of us and proposes Himself to us as Guide, Example, Consoler, Friend, Companion, everything; and gathers up all duty, all blessedness, in the majestic and simple words, 'Follow Me.'

It is a call at the least to accept Him as a Teacher, but the whole gist of the context here is to show us that from the beginning Christ's disciples did not look upon Him as a Rabbi's disciples did, as being simply a teacher, but recognised Him as the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel. So that they were called upon by this command to accept His teaching in a very special way, not merely as Hillel or Gamaliel asked their disciples to accept theirs. Do you do that? Do you take Him as your illumination about all matters of theoretical truth, and of practical wisdom? Is His declaration of God your theology? Is His declaration of His own Person your creed? Do you think about His Cross as He did when He elected to be remembered in all the world by the broken body and the shed blood, which were the symbols of His reconciling death? Is His teaching, that the Son of Man comes to 'give His life a ransom for many,' the ground of your hope? Do you follow Him in your belief, and following Him in your belief, do you accept Him as, by His death and passion, the Saviour of your soul? That is the first step—to follow Him, to trust Him wholly for what He is, the Incarnate Son of God, the Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and therefore for your sins and mine. This is a call to faith.

It is also a call to obedience. 'Follow Me' certainly means 'Do as I bid you,' but softens all the harshness of that command. Sedulously plant your tremulous feet in His firm footsteps. Where you see His track going across the bog be not afraid to walk after Him, though it may seem to lead you into the deepest and the blackest of it. 'Follow Him' and you will be right. 'Follow Him' and you will be blessed. Do as Christ did, or as according to the best of your judgment it

seems to you that Christ would have done if He had been in your circumstances ; and you will not go far wrong. 'The Imitation of Christ,' which Thomas à Kempis wrote his book about, is the sum of all practical Christianity. 'Follow Me!' makes discipleship to be something more than intellectual acceptance of His teaching, something more than even reliance for my salvation upon His work. It makes discipleship—springing out of these two—the acceptance of His teaching and the consequent reliance, by faith, upon His word—to be a practical reproduction of His character and conduct in mine.

It is a call to communion. If a man follows Christ he will walk close behind Him, and near enough to Him to hear Him speak, and to be 'guided by His eye.' He will be separated from other people, and from other paths. In these four things, then—Faith, Obedience, Imitation, Communion—lies the essence of discipleship. No man is a Christian who has not in some measure all four. Have you got them?

What right has Jesus Christ to ask me to follow Him? Why should I? Who is He that He should set Himself up as being the perfect Example and the Guide for all the world? What has He done to bind me to Him, that I should take Him for my Master, and yield myself to Him in a subjection that I refuse to the mightiest names in literature, and thought, and practical benevolence? Who is this that assumes thus to dominate over us all? Ah! brethren, there is only one answer. 'This is none other than the Son of God who has given Himself a ransom for me, and therefore has the right, and only therefore has the right, to say to me, "Follow Me."'

III. And now one last word. Think for a moment about this silently and swiftly obedient disciple.

Philip says nothing. Of course the narrative is mere sketchy outline. He is silent, but he yields. Ah, brethren, how quickly a soul may be won or lost! That moment, when Philip's decision was trembling in the balance, was but a moment. It might have gone the other way, for Christ has no pressed men in His army; they are all volunteers. It might have gone the other way. A moment may settle for you whether you will be His disciple or not. People tell us that the belief in instantaneous conversions is unphilosophical. It seems to me that the objections to them are unphilosophical. All decisions are matters of an instant. Hesitation may be long, weighing and balancing may be a protracted process, but the decision is always a moment's work, a knife-edge. And there is no reason whatever why any one listening to me may not now, if he or she will, do as this man Philip did on the spot, and when Christ says 'Follow Me,' turn to Him and answer, 'I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.'

There is an old church tradition which says that the disciple who at a subsequent period answered Christ, 'Lord! suffer me first to go and bury my father,' was this same Apostle. I do not think that at all likely, but the tradition suggests to us one last thought about the reasons why people are kept back from yielding this obedience to Christ's invitation. Many of you are kept back, as that procrastinating follower was, because there are some other duties which you feel, or make to be, more important. 'I will think about Christianity and turning religious when this, that, or the other thing has been got over. I have my position in life to

make. I have a great many things to do that must be done at once, and really, I have not time to think about it.'

Then there are some of you that are kept from following Christ because you have never yet found out that you need a guide at all. Then there are some of you that are kept back because you like very much better to go your own way, and to follow your own inclination, and dislike the idea of following the will of another. There are a host of other reasons that I do not need to deal with now; but oh! brethren, none of them is worth pleading. They are excuses, they are not reasons. 'They all with one consent began to make excuse'—excuses, not reasons; and manufactured excuses, in order to cover a decision which has been taken before, and on other grounds altogether, which it is not convenient to bring up to the surface. I am not going to deal with these in detail, but I beseech you, do not let what I venture to call Christ's seeking of you once more, even by my poor words now, be in vain.

Follow Him. Trust, obey, imitate, hold fellowship with Him. You will always have a Companion, you will always have a Protector. 'He that followeth Me,' saith He, 'shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' And if you will listen to the Shepherd's voice and follow Him, that sweet old promise will be true, in its divinest and sweetest sense, about your life, in time; and about your life in the moment of death, the isthmus between two worlds, and about your life in eternity—'They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun nor heat smite them; for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.' 'Follow thou Me.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: IV. NATHANAEL

‘Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48. Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49. Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.’—JOHN i. 45-49.

THE words are often the least part of a conversation. The Evangelist can tell us what Nathanael said to Jesus, and what Jesus said to Nathanael, but no Evangelist can reproduce the look, the tone, the magnetic influence which streamed out from Christ, and, we may believe, more than anything He said, riveted these men to Him.

It looks as if Nathanael and his companions were very easily convinced, as if their adhesion to such tremendous claims as those of Jesus Christ was much too facile a thing to be a very deep one. But what can be put down in black and white goes a very short way to solve the secret of the power which drew them to Himself.

The incident which is before us now runs substantially on the same lines as the previous bringing of Peter to Jesus Christ. In both cases the man is brought by a friend, in both cases the friend’s weapon is simply the expression of his own personal experience, ‘We have found the Messiah,’ although Philip has a little more to say about Christ’s correspondence with the prophetic word. In both cases the work is finished by our Lord Himself manifesting His own supernatural knowledge to the inquiring spirit, though in the case of Nathanael that process is a little more lengthened

out than in the case of Peter, because there was a little ice of hesitation and of doubt to be melted away. And Nathanael, starting from a lower point than Peter, having questions and hesitations which the other had not, rises to a higher point of faith and certitude, and from his lips first of all comes the full articulate confession, beyond which the Apostles never went as long as our Lord was upon earth: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.' So that both in regard to the revelation that is given of the character of our Lord, and in regard to the teaching that is given of the development and process of faith in a soul, this last narrative fitly crowns the whole series. In looking at it with you now, I think I shall best bring out its force by asking you to take it as falling into these three portions: first, the preparation—a soul brought to Christ by a brother; then the conversation—a soul fastened to Christ by Himself; and then the rapturous confession—'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'

I. Look, then, first of all, at the preparation—a soul brought to Christ by a brother.

'Philip findeth Nathanael.' Nathanael, in all probability, as commentators will tell you, is the Apostle Bartholomew; and in the catalogues of the Apostles in the Gospels, Philip and he are always associated together. So that the two men, friends before, had their friendship riveted and made more close by this sacreddest of all bonds, that the one had been to the other the means of bringing him to Jesus Christ. There is nothing that ties men to each other like that. If you want to know the full sweetness of association with friends, and of human love, get some heart knit to yours by this sacred and eternal bond that it owes to you its first

knowledge of the Saviour. So all human ties will be sweetened, ennobled, elevated, and made perpetual.

‘We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.’ Philip knows nothing about Christ’s supernatural birth, nor about its having been in Bethlehem; to him He is the son of a Nazarene peasant. But, notwithstanding that, He is the great, significant, mysterious Person for whom the whole sacred literature of Israel had been one long yearning for centuries; and he has come to believe that this Man standing beside him is the Person on whom all previous divine communications for a millennium past focussed and centred.

I need not dwell upon these words, because to do so would be to repeat substantially what I said in a former sermon on these first disciples, about the value of personal conviction as a means of producing conviction in the minds of others, and about the necessity and the possibility of all who have found Christ for themselves saying so to others, and thereby becoming His missionaries and evangelists.

I do not need to repeat what I said on that occasion; therefore I pass on to the very natural hesitation and question of Nathanael: ‘Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ A prejudice, no doubt, but a very harmless one; a very thin ice which melted as soon as Christ’s smile beamed upon him. And a most natural prejudice. Nathanael came from Cana of Galilee, a little hill village, three or four miles from Nazareth. We all know the bitter feuds and jealousies of neighbouring villages, and how nothing is so pleasant to the inhabitants of one as a gibe about the inhabitants of another. And in Nathanael’s words there

simply speaks the rustic jealousy of Cana against Nazareth.

It is easy to blame him, but do you think that you or I, if we had been in his place, would have been likely to have said anything very different? Suppose you were told that a peasant out of Ross-shire was a man on whom the whole history of this nation hung. Do you think you would be likely to believe it without first saying, 'That is a strange place for such a person to be born in'? Galilee was the despised part of Palestine, and Nazareth obviously was a proverbially despised village of Galilee; and this Jesus was a carpenter's son that nobody had ever heard of. It seemed to be a strange head on which the divine dove should flutter down, passing by all the Pharisees and the Scribes, all the great people and wise people. Nathanael's prejudice was but the giving voice to a fault that is as wide as humanity, and which we have every day of our lives to fight with; not only in regard to religious matters but in regard to all others—namely, the habit of estimating people, and their work, and their wisdom, and their power to teach us, by the class to which they are supposed to belong, or even by the place from which they come.

'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' 'Can a German teach an Englishman anything that he does not know?' 'Is a Protestant to owe anything of spiritual illumination to a Roman Catholic?' 'Are we Dissenters to receive any wisdom or example from Churchmen?' 'Will a Conservative be able to give any lessons in politics to a Liberal?' 'Is there any other bit of England that can teach Lancashire?' Take care that whilst you are holding up your hands in horror against the prejudices of our Lord's contem-

poraries, who stumbled at His origin, you are not doing the same thing in regard to all manner of subjects twenty times a day.

That is one very plain lesson, and not at all too secular for a sermon. Take another. This three-parts innocent prejudice of Nathanael brings into clear relief for us what a very real obstacle to the recognition of our Lord's Messianic authority His apparently lowly origin was. We have got over it, and it is no difficulty to us; but it was so then. When Jesus Christ came into this world Judæa was ruled by the most heartless of aristocracies, an aristocracy of cultured pedants. Wherever you get such a class you get people who think that there can be nobody worth looking at, or worth attending to, outside the little limits of their own supercilious superiority. Why did Jesus Christ come from 'the men of the earth,' as the Rabbis called all who had not learned to cover every plain precept with spiders' webs of casuistry? Why, for one thing, in accordance with the general law that the great reformers and innovators always come from outside these classes, that the Spirit of the Lord shall come on a herdsman like Amos, and fishermen and peasants spread the Gospel through the world; and that in politics, in literature, in science, as well as in religion, it is always true that 'not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' To the cultivated classes you have to look for a great deal that is precious and good, but for fresh impulse, in unbroken fields, you have to look outside them. And so the highest of all lives is conformed to the general law.

More than that, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph,' came thus because He was the poor man's

Christ, because He was the ignorant man's Christ, because His word was not for any class, but as broad as the world. He came poor, obscure, unlettered, that all who, like Him, were poor and untouched by the finger of earthly culture, might in Him find their Brother, their Helper, and their Friend.

'Philip saith unto him, Come and see.' He is not going to argue the question. He gives the only possible answer to it—'You ask Me, can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' 'Come and see whether it is a good thing or no; and if it is, and if it came out of Nazareth, well then, the question has answered itself.' The quality of a thing cannot be settled by the origin of the thing.

As it so happened, this Man did not come out of Nazareth at all, though neither Philip nor Nathanael knew it; but if He had, it would have been all the same. The right answer was 'Come and see.'

Now although, of course, there is no kind of correspondence between the mere prejudice of this man Nathanael and the rooted intellectual doubts of other generations, yet 'Come and see' carries in it the essence of all Christian apologetics. By far the wisest thing that any man who has to plead the cause of Christianity can do is to put Christ well forward, and let people look at Him, and trust Him to produce His own impression. We may argue round, and round, and round about Him for evermore, and we shall never convince as surely as by simply holding Him forth. 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Yet we are so busy proving Christianity that we sometimes have no time to preach it; so busy demonstrating that Jesus Christ is this, that, and the other thing, or contradicting the notion that He is not this, that, and the

other thing, that we forget simply to present Him for men to look at. Depend upon it, whilst argument has its function, and there are men that must be approached thereby; on the whole, and for the general, the best way of propagating Christianity is to proclaim it, and the second best way is to prove it. Our arguments do fare very often very much as did that elaborate discourse that a bishop once preached to prove the existence of a God, at the end of which a simple old woman who had not followed his reasoning very intelligently, exclaimed, 'Well, for all he says, I can't help thinking there is a God after all.' The errors that are quoted to be confuted often remain more clear in the hearers' minds than the attempted confutations. Hold forth Christ—cry aloud to men, 'Come and see!' and some eyes will turn and some hearts cleave to Him.

And on the other side, dear brethren, you have not done fairly by Christianity until you have complied with this invitation, and submitted your mind and heart honestly to the influence and the impression that Christ Himself would make upon it.

II. We come now to the second stage—the conversation between Christ and Nathanael, where we see a soul fastened to Christ by Himself.

In general terms, as I remarked, the method by which our Lord manifests His Messiahship to this single soul is a revelation of His supernatural knowledge of him. But a word or two may be said about the details. Mark the emphasis with which the Evangelist shows us that our Lord speaks this discriminating characterisation of Nathanael before Nathanael had come to Him: 'He saw him coming.' So it was not with a swift, penetrating glance of intuition that He read his

character in his face. It was not that He generalised rapidly from one action which He had seen him do. It was not from any previous personal knowledge of him, for, obviously, from the words of Philip to Nathanael, the latter had never seen Jesus Christ. As Nathanael was drawing near Him, before he had done anything to show himself, our Lord speaks the words which show that He had read his very heart: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.'

That is to say, here is a man who truly represents that which was the ideal of the whole nation. The reference is, no doubt, to the old story of the occasion on which Jacob's name was changed to Israel. And we shall see a further reference to the same story in the subsequent verses. Jacob had wrestled with God in that mysterious scene by the brook Jabbok, and had overcome, and had received instead of the name Jacob, 'a supplanter,' the name of Israel, 'for as a Prince hast thou power with God and hast prevailed.' And, says Christ: 'This man also is a son of Israel, one of God's warriors, who has prevailed with Him by prayer.' 'In whom is no guile'—Jacob in his early life had been marked and marred by selfish craft. Subtlety and guile had been the very keynote of his character. To drive that out of him, years of discipline and pain and sorrow had been needed. And not until it had been driven out of him could his name be altered, and he become Israel. This man has had the guile driven out of him. By what process? The words are a verbal quotation from Psalm xxxii.: 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' Clear, candid openness of spirit, and the freedom of soul from all

that corruption which the Psalmist calls 'guile,' is the property of him only who has received it, by confession, by pardon, and by cleansing, from God. Thus Nathanael, in his wrestling, had won the great gift. His transgression had been forgiven; his iniquity had been covered; to him God had not imputed his sin; and in his spirit, therefore, there was no guile. Ah, brother! if that black drop is to be cleansed out of your heart, it must be by the same means—confession to God and pardon from God. And then you too will be a prince with Him, and your spirit will be frank and free, and open and candid.

Nathanael, with astonishment, says, 'Lord, whence knowest Thou me?' Not that he appropriates the description to himself, or recognises the truthfulness of it, but he is surprised that Christ should have means of forming any judgment with reference to him, and so he asks Him, half expecting an answer which will show the natural origin of our Lord's knowledge: 'Whence knowest Thou me?' Then comes the answer, which, to supernatural insight into Nathanael's character, adds supernatural knowledge of Nathanael's secret actions: 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. And it is because I saw thee under the fig-tree that I knew thee to be "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."' So then, under the fig-tree, Nathanael must have been wrestling in prayer; under the fig-tree must have been confessing his sins; under the fig-tree must have been longing and looking for the Deliverer who was to 'turn away ungodliness from Jacob.' So solitary had been that vigil, and so little would any human eye that had looked upon it have known what had been passing in his mind, that Christ's knowledge of it and of its

significance at once lights up in Nathanael's heart the fire of the glad conviction, 'Thou art the Son of God.' If we had seen Nathanael, we should only have seen a man sitting, sunk in thought, under a fig-tree; but Jesus had seen the spiritual struggle which had no outward marks, and to have known which He must have exercised the divine prerogative of reading the heart.

I ask you to consider whether Nathanael's conclusion was not right, and whether that woman of Samaria was not right when she hurried back to the city, leaving her water-pot, and said, 'Come and see a man that told me *all* that ever I did.' That 'all' was a little stretch of facts, but still it was true in spirit. And her inference was absolutely true: 'Is not this the Christ, the Son of God?' This is the first miracle that Jesus Christ wrought. His supernatural knowledge, which cannot be struck out from the New Testament representations of His character, is as much a mark of divinity as any of the other of His earthly manifestations. It is not the highest; it does not appeal to our sympathies as some of the others do, but it is irrefragable. Here is a man to whom all men with whom He came in contact were like those clocks with a crystal face which shows us all the works. How does He come to have this perfect and absolute knowledge?

That omniscience, as manifested here, shows us how glad Christ is when He sees anything good, anything that He can praise in any of us. 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' Not a word about Nathanael's prejudice, not a word about any of his faults (though no doubt he had plenty of them), but the cordial praise that he was an honest, a sincere man, following after God and after truth. There is nothing

which so gladdens Christ as to see in us any faint traces of longing for, and love towards, and likeness to, His own self. His omniscience is never so pleased as when beneath heaps and mountains of vanity and sin it discerns in a man's heart some poor germ of goodness and longing for His grace.

And then again, notice how we have here our Lord's omniscience set forth as cognisant of all our inward crises and struggles. 'When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.' I suppose all of us could look back to some place or other, under some hawthorn hedge, or some boulder by the seashore, or some mountain-top, or perhaps in some back-parlour, or in some crowded street, where some never-to-be-forgotten epoch in our soul's history passed, unseen by all eyes, and which would have shown no trace to any onlooker, except perhaps a tightly compressed lip. Let us rejoice to feel that Christ sees all these moments which no other eye can see. In our hours of crisis, and in our monotonous, uneventful moments, in the rush of the furious waters, when the stream of our lives is caught among rocks, and in the long, languid reaches of its smoothest flow, when we are fighting with our fears or yearning for His light, or even when sitting dumb and stolid, like snow men, apathetic and frozen in our indifference, He sees us, and pities, and will help the need which He beholds.

'Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy Saviour is not by ;
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy Saviour is not near.'

'When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.'

III. One word more about this rapturous confession,

which crowns the whole: 'Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.'

Where had Nathanael learned these great names? He was a disciple of John the Baptist, and he had no doubt heard John's testimony as recorded in this same chapter, when he told us how the voice from Heaven had bid him recognise the Messiah by the token of the descending Dove, and how he 'saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.' John's testimony was echoed in Nathanael's confession. Undoubtedly he attached but vague ideas to the name, far less articulate and doctrinal than we have the privilege of doing. To him 'Son of God' could not have meant all that it ought to mean to us, but it meant something that he saw clearly, and a great deal beyond that he saw but dimly. It meant that God had sent, and was in some special sense the Father of, this Jesus of Nazareth.

'Thou art the King of Israel.' John had been preaching, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' The Messiah was to be the theocratic King, the King, not of 'Judah' nor of 'the Jews,' but of 'Israel,' the nation that had entered into covenant with God. So the substance of the confession was the Messiahship of Jesus, as resting upon His special divine relationship and leading to His Kingly sway.

Notice also the enthusiasm of the confession; one's ear hears clearly a tone of rapture in it. The joy-bells of the man's heart are all a-ringing. It is no mere intellectual acknowledgment of Christ as Messiah. The difference between mere head-belief and heart-faith lies precisely in the presence of these elements of confidence, of enthusiastic loyalty, and absolute submission.

So the great question for each of us is, not, Do I

believe as a piece of my intellectual creed that Christ is 'the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel'? I suppose almost all my hearers here now do that. That will not make you a Christian, my friend. That will neither save your soul nor quiet your heart, nor bring you peace and strength in life, nor open the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven to you. A man may be miserable, wholly sunk in all manner of wickedness and evil, die the death of a dog, and go to punishment hereafter, though he believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the King of Israel. You want something more than that. You want just this element of rapturous acknowledgment, of loyal submission, absolute obedience, of unfaltering trust.

Look at these first disciples, six brave men that had all that loyalty and love to Him; though there was not a soul in the world but themselves to share their convictions. Do they not shame you? When He comes to you, as He does come, with this question, 'Whom do ye say that I am?' may God give you grace to answer, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and not only to answer it with your lips, but to trust Him wholly with your hearts, and with enthusiastic devotion to bow your whole being in adoring wonder and glad submission at His feet. If we are 'Israelites indeed,' our hearts will crown Him as the 'King of Israel.'

THE FIRST DISCIPLES: V. BELIEVING AND SEEING

'Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51. And He saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'—JOHN i. 50, 51.

HERE we have the end of the narrative of the gathering together of the first disciples, which has occupied several sermons. We have had occasion to point out how each incident in the series has thrown some fresh light upon two main subjects, namely, upon some phase or other of the character and work of Jesus Christ, or upon the various ways by which faith, which is the condition of discipleship, is kindled in men's souls. These closing words may be taken as the crowning thoughts on both these matters.

Our Lord recognises and accepts the faith of Nathanael and his fellows, but, like a wise Teacher, lets His pupils at the very beginning get a glimpse of how much lies ahead for them to learn; and in the act of accepting the faith gives just one hint of the great tract of yet uncomprehended knowledge of Him which lies before them; 'Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.' He accepts Nathanael's confession and the confession of his fellows. Human lips have given Him many great and wonderful titles in this chapter. John called Him 'the Lamb of God'; the first disciples hailed Him as the 'Messias, which is the Christ'; Nathanael fell before Him with the rapturous exclamation, 'Thou art the Son of God;

Thou art the King of Israel!’ All these crowns had been put on His head by human hands, but here He crowns Himself. He makes a mightier claim than any that they had dreamed of, and proclaims Himself to be the medium of all communication and intercourse between heaven and earth: ‘Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.’

So, then, there are two great principles that lie in these verses, and are contained in, first, our Lord’s mighty promise to His new disciples, and second, in our Lord’s witness to Himself. Let me say a word or two about each of these.

I. Our Lord’s promise to His new disciples.

Christ’s words here may be translated either as a question or as an affirmation. It makes comparatively little difference to the substantial meaning whether we read ‘believest thou?’ or ‘thou believest.’ In the former case there will be a little more vivid expression of surprise and admiration at the swiftness of Nathanael’s faith, but in neither case are we to find anything of the nature of blame or of doubt as to the reality of his belief. The question, if it be a question, is no question as to whether Nathanael’s faith was a genuine thing or not. There is no hint that he has been too quick with his confession, and has climbed too rapidly to the point that he has attained. But in either case, whether the word be a question or an affirmation, we are to see in it the solemn and glad recognition of the reality of Nathanael’s confession and belief.

Here is the first time that that word ‘belief’ came from Christ’s lips; and when we remember all the importance that has been attached to it in the sub-

sequent history of the Church, and the revolution in human thought which followed upon our Lord's demand of our faith, there is an interest in noticing the first appearance of the word. It was an epoch in the history of the world when Christ first claimed and accepted a man's faith.

Of course the second part of this verse, 'Thou shalt see greater things than these,' has its proper fulfilment in the gradual manifestation of His person and character, which followed through the events recorded in the Gospels. His life of service, His words of wisdom, His deeds of power and of pity, His death of shame and of glory, His Resurrection and His Ascension, these are the 'greater things' which Nathanael is promised. They all lay unrevealed yet, and what our Lord means is simply this: 'If you will continue to trust in Me, as you have trusted Me, and stand beside Me, you will see unrolled before your eyes and comprehended by your faith the great facts which will make the manifestation of God to the world.' But though that be the original application of the words, yet I think we may fairly draw from them some lessons that are of importance to ourselves; and I ask you to look at the hint that they give us about three things,—faith and discipleship, faith and sight, faith and progress. 'Believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.'

First, here is light thrown upon the relation between faith and discipleship. It is clear that our Lord here uses the word for the first time in the full Christian sense, that He regards the exercise of faith as being practically synonymous with being a disciple, that from the very first, believers were disciples, and disciples were believers.

Then, notice still further that our Lord here employs the word 'belief' without any definition of what or whom it is that they were to believe. He Himself, and not certain thoughts about Him, is the true object of a man's faith. We may believe a proposition, but faith must grasp a person. Even when the person is made known to us by a proposition which we have to believe before we can trust the person, still the essence of faith is not the intellectual process of laying hold upon a certain thought, and acquiescing in it, but the moral process of casting myself in full confidence upon the Being that is revealed to me by the thought,—of laying my hand, and leaning my weight, on the Man about whom it tells me. And so faith, which is discipleship, has in it for its very essence the personal element of trust in Jesus Christ.

Then, further, notice how widely different from our creed was Nathanael's creed, and yet how identical with our faith, if we are Christians, was Nathanael's faith. He knew nothing about the very heart of Christ's work, His atoning death. He knew nothing about the highest glory of Christ's person, His divine Sonship, in its unique and lofty sense. These lay unrevealed, and were amongst the greater things which he was yet to see; but though thus his knowledge was imperfect, and his creed incomplete as compared with ours, his faith was the very same. He laid hold upon Christ, he clave to Him with all his heart, he was ready to accept His teaching, he was willing to do His will, and as for the rest—'Thou shalt see greater things than these.' So, dear brethren, from these words of my text here, from the unhesitating attribution of the lofty notion of faith to this man, from the way in which our Lord uses the word, are gathered

these three points that I beseech you to ponder: there is no discipleship without faith; faith is the personal grasp of Christ Himself; the contents of creeds may differ whilst the element of faith remains the same. I beseech you let Christ come to you with the question of my text, and as He looks you in the eyes, hear Him say to you, 'Believest *thou*?'

Secondly, notice how in this great promise to the new disciples there is light thrown upon another subject, viz. the connection between faith and sight. There is a great deal about seeing in this context. Christ said to the first two that followed Him, 'Come and see.' Philip met Nathanael's thin film of prejudice with the same words, 'Come and see.' Christ greeted the approaching Nathanael with 'When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee.' And now His promise is cast into the same metaphor: 'Thou shalt see greater things than these.'

There is a double antithesis here. 'I saw thee,' 'Thou shalt see Me.' 'Thou wast convinced because thou didst feel that thou wert the passive object of My vision. Thou shalt be still more convinced when illuminated by Me. Thou shalt see even as thou art seen. I saw thee, and that bound thee to Me; thou shalt see Me, and that will confirm the bond.'

There is another antithesis, namely—between believing and seeing. 'Thou believest—that is thy present; thou shalt see, that is thy hope for the future.' Now I have already explained that, in the proper primary meaning and application of the words, the sight which is here promised is simply the observance with the outward eye of the historical facts of our Lord's life which were yet to be learned. But still we may gather a truth from this antithesis which will be of use to

us. 'Thou believest—thou shalt see'; that is to say, in the loftiest region of spiritual experience you must believe first, in order that you may see.

I do not mean, as is sometimes meant, by that statement that a man has to try to force his understanding into the attitude of accepting religious truth, in order that he may have an experience which will convince him that it is true. I mean a very much simpler thing than that, and a very much truer one, viz. this, that unless we trust to Christ and take our illumination from Him, we shall never behold a whole set of truths which, when once we trust Him, are all plain and clear to us. It is no mysticism to say that. What do you *know* about God?—I put emphasis upon the word 'know'—What do you know about Him, however much you may argue and speculate and think probable, and fear, and hope, and question, about Him? What do you know about Him apart from Jesus Christ? What do you know about human duty, apart from Him? What do you know of all that dim region that lies beyond the grave, apart from Him? If you trust Him, if you fall at His feet and say 'Rabbi! Thou art my Teacher and mine illumination,' then you will see. You will see God, man, yourselves, duty; you will see light upon a thousand complications and perplexities; and you will have a brightness above that of the noonday sun, streaming into the thickest darkness of death and the grave and the awful hereafter. Christ is the Light. In that 'Light shall we see light.' And just as it needs the sun to rise in order that my eye may behold the outer world, so it needs that I shall have Christ shining in my heaven to illuminate the whole universe, in order that I may see clearly. 'Believe and thou shalt see.' For only

when we trust Him do the mightiest truths that affect humanity stand plain and clear before us.

And besides that, if we trust Christ, we get a living experience of a multitude of facts and principles which are all mist and darkness to men except through their faith; an experience which is so vivid and brings such certitude as that it may well be called vision. The world says, 'Seeing is believing.' So it is about the coarse things that you can handle, but about everything that is higher than these invert the proverb, and you get the truth. 'Seeing is believing.' Yes, in regard to outward things. Believing is seeing in regard to God and spiritual truth. 'Believest thou? thou shalt see.'

Then, thirdly, there is light here about another matter, the connection between faith and progress. 'Thou shalt see greater things than these.' A wise teacher stimulates his scholars from the beginning, by giving them glimpses of how much there is ahead to be learnt. That does not drive them to despair; it braces all their powers. And so Christ, as His first lesson to these men, substantially says, 'You have learnt nothing yet, you are only beginning.' That is true about us all. Faith at first, both in regard to its contents and its quality, is very rudimentary and infantile. A man when he is first converted—perhaps suddenly—knows after a fashion that he himself is a very sinful, wretched, poor creature, and he knows that Jesus Christ has died for him, and is his Saviour, and his heart goes out to Him, in confidence and love and obedience. But he is only standing at the door and peeping in as yet. He has only mastered the alphabet. He is but on the frontier of the promised land. His faith has brought him into contact with

Infinite power, and what will be the end of that? He will indefinitely grow. His faith has started him on a course to which there is no natural end. As long as it keeps alive he will be growing and growing, and getting nearer and nearer to the great centre of all.

So here is a grand possibility opened out in these simple words, a possibility which alone meets what you need, and what you are craving for, whether you know it or not, namely, something that will give you ever new powers and acquirements; something which will ensure your closer and ever closer approach to an absolute object of joy and truth; something that will ensure you against stagnation and guarantee unceasing progress. Everything else gets worn out, sooner or later; if not in this world, then in another. There is one course on which a man can enter with the certainty that there is no end to it, that it will open out, and out, and out as he advances—with the certainty that, come life, come death, it is all the same.

When the plant grows too tall for the greenhouse they lift the roof, and it grows higher still. Whether you have your growth in this lower world, or whether you have your top up in the brightness and the blue of heaven, the growth is in one direction. There is a way that secures endless progress, and here lies the secret of it: 'Thou believest! thou shalt see greater things than these.'

Now, brethren, that is a grand possibility, and it is a solemn lesson for some of you. You professing Christian people, are you any taller than you were when you were born? Have you grown at all? Are you growing now? Have you seen any further into

the depths of Jesus Christ than you did on that first day when you fell at His feet and said, 'Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel'? His promise to you then was, 'Thou believest, thou shalt see greater things.' If you have not seen greater things it is because your faith has broken down, if it has not expired.

II. Now let me turn to the second thought which lies in these great words.

We have here, as I said, our Lord crowning Himself by His own witness to His own dignity. 'Hereafter ye shall see the heavens opened.' Mark how, with superbly autocratic lips, He bases this great utterance upon nothing else but His own word. Prophets ever said, 'Thus saith the Lord.' Christ ever said: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you.' 'Because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself.' He puts His own assurance instead of all argument and of all support to His words.

'Hereafter.' A word which is possibly not genuine, and is omitted, as you will observe, in the Revised Version. If it is to be retained it must be translated, not 'hereafter,' as if it were pointing to some indefinite period in the future, but 'from henceforth,' as if asserting that the opening heavens and the descending angels began to be manifested from that first hour of His official work. 'Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending.' That is an allusion from the story of Jacob at Bethel. We have found reference to Jacob's history already in the conversation with Nathanael, 'An Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.' And here is an unmistakable reference to that story, when the fugitive, with his head on the stony pillow, and the violet Syrian

sky, with all its stars, rounding itself above him, beheld the ladder on which the angels of God ascended and descended. 'So,' says Christ, 'you shall see, in no vision of the night, in no transitory appearance, but in a practical waking reality, that ladder come down again, and the angels of God moving upon it in their errands of mercy.'

And who, or what, is this ladder? Christ. Do not read these words as meaning that the angels of God were to come down on Him to help, and to honour, and to succour Him as they did once or twice in His life, but as meaning that they are to ascend and descend by Him for the help and blessing of the whole world.

That is to say, to put it into plain words, Christ is the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, the ladder with its foot upon the earth in His humanity, and its top in the heavens. 'No man hath ascended up into heaven save He which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.'

My time will not allow me to expand these thoughts as I would have done; let me put them in the briefest outline. Christ is the medium of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as He is the medium of all revelation. I have spoken incidentally about that in the former part of this sermon, so I do not dwell on it now. Christ is the ladder between heaven and earth, inasmuch as in Him the sense of separation, and the reality of separation, are swept away. Sin has shut heaven; there comes down from it many a blessing upon unthankful heads, but between it in its purity and the earth in its muddy foulness 'there is a great gulf fixed.' It is not because God is great and I am small, or

because He is Infinite and I am a mere pin-point as against a great continent, it is not because He lives for ever, and my life is but a hand-breadth, it is not because of the difference between His Omniscience and my ignorance, His strength and my weakness, that I am parted from Him. 'Your sins have separated between you and your God,' and no man, build he Babels ever so high, can reach thither. There is one means by which the separation is at an end, and by which all objective hindrances to union, and all subjective hindrances, are alike swept away. Christ has come, and in Him the heavens have bended down to touch, and touching to bless, this low earth, and man and God are at one once more.

He is the ladder, or sole medium of communication, inasmuch as by Him all divine blessings, grace, helps, and favours, come down angel-like, into our weak and needy hearts. Every strength, every mercy, every spiritual power, consolation in every sorrow, fitness for duty, illumination in darkness, all gifts that any of us can need, come to us down on that one shining way, the mediation and the work of the Divine-Human Christ, the Lord.

He is the ladder, the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as by Him my poor desires and prayers and intercessions, my wishes, my sighs, my confessions rise to God. 'No man cometh to the Father but by Me.' He is the ladder, the means of all communication between heaven and earth, inasmuch as at the last, if ever we enter there at all, we shall enter through Him and through Him alone, who is 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'

Ah, dear brethren! men are telling us now that there is no connection between earth and heaven

except such as telescopes and spectroscopes can make out. We are told that there is no ladder, that there are no angels, that possibly there is no God, or if that there be, we have nothing to do with Him nor He with us; that our prayers cannot get to His ears, if He have ears, nor His hand be stretched out to help us, if He have a hand. I do not know how this cultivated generation is to be brought back again to faith in God and delivered from that ghastly doubt which empties heaven and saddens earth to its victims, but by giving heed to the word which Christ spoke to the whole race while He addressed Nathanael, 'Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' If He be the Son of God, then all these heavenly messengers reach the earth by Him. If He be the Son of Man, then every man may share in the gifts which through Him are brought into the world, and His Manhood, which evermore dwelt in heaven, even while on earth, and was ever girt about by angel presences, is at once the measure of what each of us may become, and the power by which we may become it.

One thing is needful for this wonderful consummation, even our faith. And oh! how blessed it will be if in waste solitudes we can see the open heaven, and in the blackest night the blaze of the glory of a present Christ, and hear the soft rustle of angels' wings filling the air, and find in every place 'a house of God and a gate of heaven,' because He is there. All that may be yours on one condition: 'Believest thou? Thou shalt see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

JESUS THE JOY-BRINGER

'And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2. And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. 3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. 4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. 5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. 6. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, 10. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.'—JOHN ii. 1-11.

THE exact dating of this first miracle indicates an eye-witness. As Nazareth was some thirty miles distant from the place where John was baptizing, and Cana about four miles from Nazareth, the 'third day' is probably reckoned from the day of the calling of Philip. Jesus and His disciples seem to have been invited to the marriage feast later than the other guests, as Mary was already there. She appears to have been closely connected with the family celebrating the feast, as appears from her knowledge of the deficiency in the wine, and her direction to the servants.

The first point, which John makes all but as emphatic as the miracle itself, is the new relation between Mary and Jesus, the lesson she had to learn, and her sweet triumphant trust. Now that she sees her Son surrounded by His disciples, the secret hope which she had nourished silently for so long bursts into flame, and she turns to Him with beautiful faith in His power to help, even in the small present need. What an example her first word to Him sets us all! Like the

two sad sisters at Bethany, she is sure that to tell Him of trouble is enough, for that His own heart will impel Him to share, and perchance to relieve it. Let us tell Jesus our wants and leave Him to deal with them as He knows how.

Of course, His addressing her as 'Woman' has not the meaning which it would have with us, for the term is one of respect and courtesy, but there is a plain intimation of a new distance in it, which is strengthened by the question, 'What is there in common between us?' What in common between a mother and her son! Yes, but she has to learn that the assumption of the position of Messiah in which her mother's pride so rejoiced, carried necessarily a consequence, the first of the swords which were to pierce that mother's heart of hers. That her Son should no more call her 'mother,' but 'woman,' told her that the old days of being subject to her were past for ever, and that the old relation was merged in the new one of Messiah and disciple—a bitter thought, which many a parent has to taste the bitterness of still, when wider outlooks and new sense of a vocation come to their children. Few mothers are able to accept the inevitable as Mary did. Jesus' 'hour' is not to be prescribed to Him, but His own consciousness of the fit time must determine His action. What gave Him the signal that the hour was struck is not told us, nor how soon after that moment it came. But the saying gently but decisively declares His freedom, His infallible accuracy, and certain intervention at the right time. We may think that He delays, but He always helps, 'and that right early.'

Mary's sweet humility and strong trust come out wonderfully in her direction to the servants, which is

the exact opposite of what might have been expected after the cold douche administered to her eagerness to prompt Jesus. Her faith had laid hold of the little spark of promise in that 'not yet,' and had fanned it into a flame. 'Then He will intervene, and I can leave Him to settle when.' How firm, though ignorant, must have been the faith which did not falter even at the bitter lesson and the apparent repulse, and how it puts to shame our feebler confidence in our better known Lord, if ever He delays our requests! Mary left all to Jesus; His commands were to be implicitly obeyed. Do we submit to Him in that absolute fashion both as to the time and the manner of His responses to our petitions?

The next point is the actual miracle. It is told with remarkable vividness and equally remarkable reserve. We do not even learn in what precisely it consisted. Was all the water in the vessels turned into wine? Did the change affect only what was drawn out? No answer is possible to these questions. Jesus spoke no word of power, nor put forth His hand. His will silently effected the change on matter. So He manifested forth His glory as Creator and Sustainer, as wielding the divine prerogative of affecting material things by His bare volition.

The reality of the miracle is certified by the jovial remark of the 'ruler of the feast.' As Bengel says: 'The ignorance of the ruler proves the goodness of the wine; the knowledge of the servants, the reality of the miracle.' His palate, at any rate, was not so dulled as to be unable to tell a good 'brand' when he tasted it, nor is there any reason to suppose that Jesus was supplying more wine to a company that had already had more than enough.

The ruler's words are not meant to apply to the guests at that feast, but are quite general. But this Evangelist is fond of quoting words which have deeper meanings than the speakers dreamed, and with his mystically contemplative eye he sees hints and symbols of the spiritual in very common things. So we are not forcing higher meanings into the ruler's jest, but catching one intention of John's quotation of it, when we see in it an unconscious utterance of the great truth that Jesus keeps His best wine till the last. How many poor deluded souls are ever finding that the world does the very opposite, luring men on to be its slaves and victims by brilliant promises and short-lived delights, which sooner or later lose their deceitful lustre and become stale, and often positively bitter! 'The end of that mirth is heaviness.' The dreariest thing in all the world is a godless old age, and one of the most beautiful things in all the world is the calm sunset which so often glorifies a godly life that has been full of effort for Jesus, and of sorrows patiently borne as being sent by Him.

'Full often clad in radiant vest
Deceitfully goes forth the morn,'

but Christ more than keeps His morning's promises, and Christian experience is steadily progressive, if Christians cling close to Him, and Heaven will supply the transcendent confirmation of the blessed truth that was spoken unawares by the 'ruler' at that humble feast.

What effect the miracle produced on others is not told; probably the guests shared the ruler's ignorance, but its effect on the disciples is that they 'believed on Him.' They had 'believed' already, or they would not

have been disciples (John i. 50), but their faith was deepened as well as called forth afresh. Our faith ought to be continuously and increasingly responsive to His continuous manifestations of Himself which we can all find in our own experience.

Jesus 'manifested His glory' in this first sign. What were the rays of that mild radiance? Surely the chief of them, in addition to the revelation of His sovereignty over matter, to which we have already referred, is that therein He hallowed the sweet sacred joys of marriage and family life, that therein He revealed Himself as looking with sympathetic eye on the ties that bind us together, and on the gladness of our common humanity, that therein He reveals Himself as able and glad to sanctify and elevate our joys and infuse into them a strange new fragrance and power. The 'water' of our ordinary lives is changed into 'wine.' Jesus became 'acquainted with grief' in order that He might impart to every believing and willing soul His own joy, and that by its remaining in us, our joy might be full.

THE FIRST MIRACLE IN CANA—THE WATER MADE WINE

'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory.'—JOHN ii. 11.

THE keynote of this Gospel was struck in the earlier verses of the first chapter in the great words, 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth.' To these words there is an evident reference in this language. The Evangelist regards Christ's first miracle as the

first ray of that forth-flashing glory of the Incarnate Word. To this Evangelist all miracles are especially important as being *signs*, which is the word he generally employs to designate them. They are not mere portents, but significant revelations as well as wonders. It is not, I think, accidental that there are just seven miracles of our Lord's, before His crucifixion, recorded by John, and one of the Risen Lord.

These signs are all set forth by the Evangelist as manifestations of various aspects of that one white light of uncreated glory which rays from Christ. They are, if I may so say, the sevenfold colours into which the one beam is analysed. Each of them might be looked at in turn as presenting some fresh thought of what the 'glory . . . full of grace and truth' is.

I begin with the first of the series. What, then, is the 'glory of the only Begotten Son' which flashes forth upon us from the miracle? My object is simply to try to answer that question for you.

I. First, then, we see here the revelation of His creative power.

It is very noteworthy that the miraculous fact is veiled entirely in the narrative. Not a word is said of the method of operation, it is not even said that the miracle was wrought; we are only told what preceded it, and what followed it. Itself is shrouded in deep silence. The servants fill the water-pots.—'Draw out now,' and they draw, 'and bear it to the governor of the feast.' Where the miraculous act comes in we do not know; what was its nature we cannot tell. How far it extended is left obscure. Was all the large quantity of water in these six great vessels of stone transformed into wine, or was the change effected in the moment when the portion that was wanted was

drawn from them and on that portion only? We cannot answer the question. Probably, I think, the latter; but at all events a veil is dropped over the fact.

Only this, we see that in this miracle, even more conspicuously than in any other of our Lord's, there are no means at all employed. Sometimes He used material vehicles, anointing a man's eyes with clay, or moistening the ear with the spittle; sometimes sending a man to bathe in the Pool of Siloam; sometimes laying His hand on the sick; sometimes healing from a distance by the mere utterance of His word. But here there is not even a word; no means of any kind employed, but the silent forth-putting of His will, which, without token, without visible audible indication of any sort, passes with sovereign power into the midst of material things and there works according to His own purpose. Is not this the signature of divinity, that without means the mere forth-putting of the will is all that is wanted to mould matter as plastic to His command? It is not even, 'He spake and it was done,' but silently He willed, and 'the conscious water knew its Lord, and blushed.' This is the glory of the Incarnate Word.

Now that was no interruption of the order of things established in the Creation. There was no suspension of natural laws here. What happened was only this, that the power which generally works through mediating links came into immediate connection with the effect. What does it matter whether your engine transmits its powers through half a dozen cranks, or two or three less? What does it matter whether the chain be longer or shorter? Some parenthetical links are dropped here, that is all that is unusual. For

in all ordinary natural operations, as we call them, the profound prologue of this Gospel teaches us to believe that Christ, the Eternal Word, works according to His will. He was the Agent of creation. He is the Agent of that preservation which is only a continual creation. In Him is life, and all living things live because of the continual presence and operation upon them of His divine power. And again I say, what is phenomenal and unusual in this miracle is but the suppression of two or three of the connecting links between the continual cause of all creatural existences, and its effect. So let us learn that whether through a long chain of so-called causes, or whether close up against the effect, without the intervention of these parenthetical and transmitting media, the divine power works. The power is one, and the reason for the effect is one, that Christ ever works in the world, and is that Eternal Word, 'without whom was not anything made that was made.' 'This beginning of miracles did Christ . . . and manifested His glory.'

II. Then, again, we see here, I think, the revelation of one great purpose of our Lord's coming, to hallow all common, and especially all family, life.

What a strange contrast there is between the simple gladness of the rustic village wedding and the tremendous scene of the Temptation in the wilderness, which preceded it only by a few days! What a strange contrast there is between the sublime heights of the first chapter and the homely incident which opens the ministry! What a contrast between the rigid asceticism of the Forerunner, 'who came neither eating nor drinking,' and the Son of Man, who enters thus freely and cheerfully into the common joys and relationships of human nature! How unlike the scene at the marriage-feast

must have been to the anticipations of the half-dozen disciples that had gathered round Him, all a-tingling with expectation as to what would be the first manifestation of His Messianic power! The last thing they would have dreamed of would have been to find Him in the humble home in Cana of Galilee. Some people say 'this miracle is unworthy of Him, for it was wrought upon such a trivial occasion.' And was it a trivial occasion that prompted Him thus to commence His career, not by some high and strained and remote exhibition of more than human saintliness or power, but by entering like a Brother into the midst of common, homespun, earthly joys, and showing how His presence ennobled and sanctified these? Surely the world has gained from Him, among the many gifts that He has given to it, few that have been the fountain of more sacred sweetness and blessedness than is opened in that fact that the first manifestation of His glory had for its result the hallowing of the marriage tie.

And is it not in accordance with the whole meaning and spirit of His works that 'forasmuch as the brethren were partakers of' anything, 'He Himself likewise should take part of the same,' and sanctify every incident of life by His sharing of it? So He protests against that faithless and wicked division of life into sacred and secular, which has wrought such harm both in the sacred and in the secular regions. So He protests against the notion that religion has to do with another world rather than with this. So He protests against the narrowing conception of His work which would remove from its influence anything that interests humanity. So He says, as it were, at the very beginning of His career, 'I am a Man, and nothing that is human do I reckon foreign to Myself.'

Brethren ! let us learn the lesson that all life is the region of His Kingdom ; that the sphere of His rule is everything which a man can do or feel or think. Let us learn that where His footsteps have trod is hallowed ground. If a prince shares for a few moments in the festivities of his gathered people on some great occasion, how ennobled the feast seems ! If he joins in their sports or in their occupations for a while as an act of condescension, how they return to them with renewed vigour ! And so we. We have had our King in the midst of all our family life, in the midst of all our common duties ; therefore are they consecrated. Let us learn that all things done with the consciousness of His presence are sacred. He has hallowed every corner of human life by His presence ; and the consecration, like some pungent and perennial perfume, lingers for us yet in the else scentless air of daily life, if we follow His footsteps.

Sanctity is not singularity. There is no need to withdraw from any region of human activity and human interest in order to develop the whitest saintliness, the most Christlike purity. The saint is to be in the world, but not of it ; like the Master, who went straight from the wilderness and its temptations to the homely gladness of the rustic marriage.

III. Still further, we have here a symbol of Christ's glory as the ennobler and heightener of all earthly joys.

That may be taken with perhaps a permissible play of fancy as one meaning, at any rate, of the transformation of water into wine ; the less savoury and fragrant and powerful liquid into the more so. Wine, in the Old Testament especially, is the symbol of gladness, and though it received a deeper and a sacred meaning in the New Testament as being the emblem of

His blood shed for us, it is the Old Testament point of view that prevails here. And therefore, I say, we may read in the incident the symbol of His transforming power. He comes, the Man of Sorrows, with the gift of joy in His hand. It is not an unworthy object—not unworthy, I mean, of a divine sacrifice—to make men glad. It is worth His while to come from Heaven to agonise and to die, in order that He may sprinkle some drops of incorruptible and everlasting joy over the weary and sorrowful hearts of earth. We do not always give its true importance to gladness in the economy of our lives, because we are so accustomed to draw our joys from ignoble sources that in most of our joys there is something not altogether creditable or lofty. But Christ came to bring gladness, and to transform its earthly sources into heavenly fountains; and so to change all the less sweet, satisfying, and potent draughts which we take from earth's cisterns into the wine of the Kingdom; the new wine, strong and invigorating, 'making glad the heart of man.'

Our commonest blessings, our commonest joys, if only they be not foul and filthy, are capable of this transformation. Link them with Christ; be glad in Him. Bring Him into your mirth, and it will change its character. Like a taper plunged into a jar of oxygen, it will blaze up more brightly. Earth, at its best and highest, without Him is like some fair landscape lying in the shadow; and when He comes to it, it is like the same scene when the sun blazes out upon it, flashes from every bend of the rippling river, brings beauty into many a shady corner, opens all the flowering petals, and sets all the birds singing in the sky. The whole scene changes when a beam of light from Him falls upon earthly joys. He will transform them

and ennoble them and make them perpetual. Do not meddle with mirth over which you cannot make the sign of the Cross and ask Him to bless it; and do not keep Him out of your gladness, or it will leave bitterness on your lips, howsoever sweet it tastes at first.

Ay! and not only can this Master transform the water at the marriage feast into the wine of gladness, but the cups that we all carry, into which our tears have dropped—upon these too He can lay His hand and change them into cups of blessing and of salvation.

‘Blessed are they . . . who, passing through the valley of weeping, gather their tears into a well; the rain also covereth it with blessings.’ So the old Psalm put the thought that sorrow may be turned into a solemn joy, and may lie at the foundation of our most flowery fruitfulness. And the same lesson we may learn from this symbol. The Christ who transforms the water of earthly gladness into the wine of heavenly blessedness, can do the same thing for the bitter waters of sorrow, and can make them the occasions of solemn joy. When the leaves drop we see through the bare branches. Shivering and cold they may look, but we see the stars beyond, and that is better. ‘This beginning of miracles’ will Jesus repeat in every sad heart that trusts itself to Him.

IV. And last of all, we have here a token of His glory as supplying the deficiencies of earthly sources.

‘His mother saith unto Him, “They have no wine.”’ The world’s banquet runs out, Christ supplies an infinite gift. These great water-pots that stood there, if the whole contents of them were changed, as is possible, contained far more than sufficient for the modest wants of the little company. The water that flowed from each of them, in obedience to the touch of

the servant's hand, if the change were effected then, as is possible, would flow on so long as any thirsted or any asked. And Christ gives to each of us, if we choose, a fountain that will spring unto life eternal. And when the world's platters are empty, and the world's cups are all drained dry, He will feed and satisfy the immortal hunger and the blessed thirst of every spirit that longs for Him.

The rude speech of the governor of the feast may lend itself to another aspect of this same thought. He said, in jesting surprise, 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now,' whereas the world gives its best first, and when the palate is dulled and the appetite diminished, then 'that which is worse.' How true that is; how tragically true in some of our lives! In the individual the early days of hope and vigour, when all things were fresh and wondrous, when everything was apparelled in the glory of a dream,' contrast miserably with the bitter experiences of life that most of us have made. Habit comes, and takes the edge off everything. We drag remembrance, like a lengthening chain, through all our life; and with remembrance come remorse and regret. 'The vision splendid' no more attends men, as they plod on their way through the weariness of middle life, or pass down into the deepening shadows of advancing and solitary old age. The best comes first, for the men who have no good but this world's. And some of you have got nothing in your cups but dregs that you scarcely care to drink.

But Jesus Christ keeps the best till the last. His gifts become sweeter every day. No time can cloy them. Advancing years make them more precious and more necessary. The end is better in this course than the beginning. And when life is over, and we pass

into the heavens, the word will come to our lips, with surprise and with thankfulness, as we find how much better it all is than we had ever dreamed it should be: 'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.'

Oh, my brother! do not touch that cup that is offered to you by the harlot world, spiced and fragrant and foaming; 'at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' But take the pure joys which the Christ, loved, trusted, obeyed, summoned to your feast and welcomed in your heart, will bring to you; and these shall grow and greaten until the perfection of the Heavens.

CHRIST CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

'Take these things hence; make not My Father's house an house of merchandise.'—JOHN ii. 16.

THE other Evangelists do not record this cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Christ's ministry, but, as we all know, tell of a similar act at its very close. John, on the other hand, has no notice of the latter incident. The question, then, naturally arises, are these diverse narratives accounts of the same event? The answer seems to me to be in the negative, because John's Gospel is evidently intended to supplement the other three, and to record incidents either unknown to, or unnoticed by, them, and, as a matter of fact, the whole of this initial visit of our Lord to Jerusalem is omitted by the three Evangelists. Then the two incidents are distinctly different in tone, in setting, and in the words with which our Lord accompanies them. They are both appropriate in the place in which they stand, the one as the initial and the other as all but

the final act of His Messiahship. So we may learn from the repetition of this cleansing the solemn lesson: that outward reformation of religious corruptions is of small and transient worth. For in three years—perhaps in as many weeks—the abuse that He corrected returned in full force.

Now, this narrative has many points of interest, but I think I shall best bring out its meaning if I remind you, by way of introduction, that the Temple of Jerusalem was succeeded by the Temple of the Christian Church, and that each individual Christian man is a temple. So there are three things that I want to set before you: what Christ did in the Temple; what He does in the Church; what He will do to each of us if we will let Him.

I. First, then, what Christ did in the Temple.

Now, the scene in our narrative is not unlike that which may be witnessed in any Roman Catholic country in the cathedral *place* or outside the church on the saint's day, where there are long rows of stalls, fitted up with rosaries, and images of the saint, and candles, and other apparatus for worship.

The abuse had many practical grounds on which it could be defended. It was very convenient to buy sacrifices on the spot, instead of having to drag them from a distance. It was no less convenient to be able to exchange foreign money, possibly bearing upon it the head of an emperor, for the statutory half-shekel. It was profitable to the sellers, and no doubt to the priests, who were probably sleeping partners in the concern, or drew rent for the ground on which the stalls stood. And so, being convenient for all and profitable to many, the thing became a recognised institution.

Being familiar it became legitimate, and no one thought of any incongruity in it until this young Nazarene felt a flash of zeal for the sanctity of His Father's house consuming Him. Catching up some of the reeds which served as bedding for the cattle, He twisted them into the semblance of a scourge, which could hurt neither man nor beast. He did not use it. It was a symbol, not an instrument. According to the reading adopted in the Revised Version, it was the sheep and cattle, not their owners, whom He 'drove out.' And then, dropping the scourge, He turned to the money-changers, and, with the same hand, overthrew their tables. And then came the turn of the sellers of doves. He would not hurt the birds, nor rob their owners. And so He neither overthrew nor opened the cages, but bade them 'Take these things hence'; and then came the illuminating words, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.'

Now this incident is very unlike our Lord's usual method, even if we do not exaggerate the violence which He employed. It is unlike in two respects: in the use of compulsion, and in aiming at mere outward reformation. And both of these points are intimately connected with its place in His career.

It was the first public appearance of Jesus before His nation as Messiah. He inaugurates His work by a claim—by an act of authority—to be the King of Israel and the Lord of the Temple. If we remember the words from the last prophet, in which Malachi says that 'the Messenger of the Covenant . . . shall suddenly come to His Temple, and purify the sons of Levi,' we get the significance of this incident. We have to mark in it our Lord's deliberate assumption of the rôle of Messiah; His shaping His conduct so as to

recall to all susceptible hearts that last utterance of prophecy, and to recognise the fact that at the beginning of His career He was fully conscious of His Sonship, and inaugurated His work by the solemn appeal to the nation to recognise Him as their Lord.

And this is the reason, as I take it, why the anomalous incident is in its place at the beginning of His career no less than the repetition of it was at the close. And this is the explanation of the anomaly of the incident. It is His solemn, authoritative claiming to be God's Messenger, the Messiah long foretold.

Then, further, this incident is a singular manifestation of Christ's unique power. How did it come that all these sordid hucksters had not a word to say, and did not lift a finger in opposition, or that the Temple Guard offered no resistance, and did not try to quell the unseemly disturbance, or that the very officials, when they came to reckon with Him, had nothing harsher to say than, 'What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things'? No miracle is needed to explain that singular acquiescence. We see in lower forms many instances of a similar thing. A man ablaze with holy indignation, and having a secret ally in the hearts of those whom He rebukes, will awe a crowd even if he does not infect them. But that is not the full explanation. I see here an incident analogous to that strange event at the close of Christ's ministry, when, coming out from beneath the shadows of the olives in the garden, He said to the soldiers 'Whom seek ye?' and they fell backwards and wallowed on the ground. An overwhelming impression of His personal majesty, and perhaps some forth-putting of that hidden glory which did swim up to the surface on the mountain of Transfiguration, bowed all these

men before Him, like reeds before the wind. And though there was no recognition of His claim, there was something in the Claimant that forbade resistance and silenced remonstrance.

Further, this incident is a revelation of Christ's capacity for righteous indignation. No two scenes can be more different than the two recorded in this chapter: the one that took place in the rural seclusion of Cana, nestling among the Galilean hills, the other that was done in the courts of the Temple swarming with excited festival-keepers; the one hallowing the common joys of daily life, the other rebuking the profanation of what assumed to be a great deal more sacred than a wedding festival; the one manifesting the love and sympathy of Jesus, His power to ennoble all human relationships, and His delight in ministering to need and bringing gladness, and the other setting forth the sterner aspect of His character as consumed with holy zeal for the sanctity of God's name and house. Taken together, one may say that they cover the whole ground of His character, and in some very real sense are a summary of all His work. The programme contains the whole of what is to follow hereafter.

We may well take the lesson, which no generation ever needed more than the present, both by reason of its excellences and of its defects, that there were no love worthy of a perfect spirit in which there did not lie dormant a dark capacity of wrath, and that Christ Himself would not have been the Joy-bringer, the sympathising Gladdener which He manifested Himself as being in the 'beginning of miracles in Cana of Galilee' unless, side by side, there had lain in Him the power of holy indignation and, if need be, of stern

rebuke. Brethren, we must retain our conception of His anger if we are not to maim our conception of His love. There is no wrath like the wrath of the Lamb. The Temple court, with the strange figure of the Christ with a scourge in His hand, is a revelation which this generation, with its exaggerated sentimentalism, with its shrinking, by reason of its good and of its evil, from the very notion of a divine retribution based upon the eternal antagonism between good and evil, most sorely needs.

II. Now, secondly, notice what Christ does in His Church.

I need not remind you how God's method of restoration is always to restore with a difference and a progress. The ruined Temple on Zion was not to be followed by another house of stone and lime, but by 'a spiritual house,' builded together for 'a habitation of God in the Spirit.' The Christian Church takes the place of that material sanctuary, and is the dwelling-place of God.

That being so, let us take the lesson that that house, too, may be desecrated. There may be, as there were in the original Temple, the externals of worship, and yet, eating out the reality of these, there may be an inward mercenary spirit.

Note how insensibly such corruption creeps in to a community. You cannot embody an idea in a form or in an external association without immediately dragging it down, and running the risk of degradation. It is just like a drop of quicksilver which you cannot expose to the air but instantaneously its brightness is dimmed by the scum that forms on its surface. A church as an outward institution is exposed to all the dangers to which other institutions are exposed. And

these creep on insensibly, as this abuse had crept on. So it is not enough that we should be at ease in our consciences in regard to our practices as Christian communities. We become familiar with any abuse, and as we become familiar we lose the power of rightly judging of it. Therefore conscience needs to be guided and enlightened quite as much as to be obeyed.

How long has it taken the Christian Church to learn the wickedness of slavery? Has the Christian Church yet learned the unchristianity of War? Are there no abuses amongst us, which subsequent generations will see to be so glaring that they will talk about us as we talk about our ancestors, and wonder whether we were Christians at all when we could tolerate such things? They creep on gradually, and they need continual watchfulness if they are not to assume the mastery.

The special type of corruption which we find in this incident is one that besets the Church always. Of course, if I were preaching to ministers, I should have a great deal to say about that. For men that are necessarily paid for preaching have a sore temptation to preach for pay. But it is not only we professionals who have need to lay to heart this incident. It is all Christian communities, established and non-established churches, Roman Catholic and Protestant. The same danger besets them all. There must be money to work the outward business of the house of God. But what about people that 'run' churches as they run mills? What about people whose test of the prosperity of a Christian community is its balance-sheet? What about the people that hang on to religious communities and services for the sake of what they can make out of them? We have heard a great deal lately about what would happen 'if Christ came to Chicago.' If Christ

came to any community of professing Christians in this land, do you not think He would need to have the scourge in His hand, and to say 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise'? He will come; He does come; He is always coming if we would listen to Him. And at long intervals He comes in some tremendous and manifest fashion, and overthrows the money-changers' tables.

Ah, brethren! if Jesus Christ had not thus come, over and over again, to His Church, Christian men would have killed Christianity long ago. Did you ever think that Christianity is the only religion that has shown recuperative power and that has been able to fling off its peccant humours? They used to say—I do not know whether it is true or not—that Thames water was good to put on board ship because of its property of corrupting and then clearing itself, and becoming fit to drink. We and our brethren, all through the ages, have been corrupting the Water of Life. And how does it come to be sweet and powerful still? This tree has substance in it when it casts its leaves. That unique characteristic of Christianity, its power of reformation, is not self-reformation, but it is a coming of the Lord to His temple to 'purify the sons of Levi, that their offering may be pleasant as in days of yore.'

So one looks upon the spectacle of churches labouring under all manner of corruptions; and one need not lose heart. The shortest day is the day before the year turns; and when the need is sorest the help is nearest. And so I, for my part, believe that very much of the organisations of all existing churches will have to be swept away. But I believe too, with all my heart—and I hope that you do—that, though the precious wheat is riddled in the sieve, and the chaff

falls to the ground, not one grain will go through the meshes. Whatever becomes of churches, the Church of Christ shall never have its strength so sapped by abuses that it must perish, or its lustre so dimmed that the Lord of the Temple must depart from His sanctuary.

III. Lastly, note what Christ will do for each of us if we will let Him.

It is not a community only which is the temple of God. For the Apostles in many places suggest, and in some distinctly say, 'ye are the temples' individually, as well as the Temple collectively, of the Most High. And so every Christian soul—by virtue of that which is the deepest truth of Christianity, the indwelling of Christ in men's hearts by faith—is a temple of God; and every human soul is meant to be and may become such. That temple can be profaned. There are many ways in which professing Christians make it a house of merchandise. There are forms of religion which are little better than chaffering with God, to give Him so much service if He will repay us with so much Heaven. There are too many temptations, to which we yield, to bring secular thoughts into our holiest things. Some of us, by reason not of wishing wealth but of dreading penury, find it hard to shut worldly cares out of our hearts. We all need to be on our guard lest the atmosphere in which we live in this great city shall penetrate even into our moments of devotion, and the noise of the market within earshot of the Holy of Holies shall disturb the chant of the worshippers. It is Manchester's temptation, and it is one that most of us need to be guarded against.

So engrossed, and, as we should say, necessarily engrossed—or, at all events, legitimately engrossed—are we in the pursuits of our daily commerce, that we

have scarcely time enough or leisure of heart and mind enough to come into 'the secret place of the Most High.' The worshippers stop outside trading for beasts and doves, and they have no time to go into the Temple and present their offerings.

It is our besetting danger. Forewarned is forearmed, to some extent. Would that we could all hear, as we go about our ordinary avocations, that solemn voice, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise,' and could keep the inner sanctuary still from the noises, and remote from the pollutions, of the market hard by!

We cannot cast out these or any other desecrating thoughts and desires by ourselves, except to a very small degree. And if we do, then there happens what our Lord warned us against in profound words. The house may be emptied of the evil tenant in some measure by our own resolution and self-reformation. But if it is not occupied by Him, it remains 'empty,' though it is 'swept and garnished.' Nature abhors a vacuum, and into the empty house there come the old tenant and seven brethren blacker than himself. The only way to keep the world out of my heart is to have Christ filling it. If we will ask Him He will come to us. And if He has the scourge in His hand, let Him be none the less welcome a guest for that. He will come, and when He enters, it will be like the rising of the sun, when all the beasts of the forest slink away and lay them down in their dens. It will be like the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of the whole earth into the temple of Dagon, when the fish-like image fell prone and mutilated on the threshold. If we say to Him, 'Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength,' He will enter

in, and by His entrance will 'make the place of His feet glorious' and pure.

THE DESTROYERS AND THE RESTORER

'Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'—JOHN ii. 19.

THIS is our Lord's answer to the Jewish request for a sign which should warrant His action in cleansing the Temple. There are two such cleansings recorded in the Gospels; this one His first public act, and another, omitted by John, but recorded in the other Gospels, which was almost His last public act.

It has been suggested that these are but two versions of one incident; and although there is no objection in principle to admitting the possibility of that explanation, yet in fact it appears to me insufficient and unnecessary. For each event is appropriate in its own place. In each there is a distinct difference in tone. The incident recorded in the present chapter has our Lord's commentary, 'Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise'; in that recorded in the Synoptic Gospels the profanation is declared as greater, and the rebuke is more severe. The 'house of merchandise' has become, by their refusal to render to Him what was His, 'a den of thieves.' In the later incident there is a reference in our Lord's quotation from the Old Testament to the entrance of the Gentiles into the Kingdom. There is no such reference here. In the other Gospels there is no record of this question which the Jews asked, nor of our Lord's significant answer, whilst yet a caricatured and mistaken version of that answer was known to the other Evangelists, and is

put by them into the mouths of the false witnesses at our Lord's trial. They thus attest the accuracy of our narrative even while they seem not to have known of the incident.

All these things being taken into account, I think that we have to do with a double, of which there are several instances in the Gospels, the same event recurring under somewhat varied circumstances, and reflecting varied aspects of truth. But it is to our Lord's words in vindication of His right to cleanse the Temple rather than to the incident on which they are based that I wish to turn your attention now: 'Destroy this Temple,' said our Lord, as His sufficient and only answer to the demand for a sign, 'and in three days I will raise it up.'

Now these words, enigmatical as they are, seem to me to be very profound and significant; and I wish, on this Easter Sunday, to look at them as throwing a light upon the gladness of this day. They suggest to me three things: I find in them, first, an enigmatical forecast of our Lord's own history; second, a prophetic warning of Israel's; and last, a symbolical foreshadowing of His world-wide work as the Restorer of man's destructions. 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

I. First then, I think, we see here an enigmatical forecast of our Lord's own history.

Notice, first, that marvellous and unique consciousness of our Lord's as to His own dignity and nature. 'He spake of the temple of His body.' Think that here is a man, apparently one of ourselves, walking amongst us, living the common life of humanity, who declares that in Him, in an altogether solitary and peculiar fashion, there abides the fulness of Deity.

Think that there has been a Man who said, 'In this place is One greater than the Temple.' And people have believed Him, and do believe Him, and have found that the tremendous audacity of the words is simple verity, and that Christ is, in inmost reality, all which the Temple was but in the poorest symbol. In it there had dwelt, though there dwelt no longer at the time when He was speaking, a material and symbolical brightness, the expression of something which, for want of a better name, we call the 'presence of God.' But what was that flashing fire between the cherubim that brooded over the Mercy-seat, with a light that was lambent and lustrous as the light of love and of life—what was that to the glory, moulded in meekness and garbed in gentleness, the glory that shone, merciful and hospitable and inviting—a tempered flame on which the poorest, diseased, blind eyes could look, and not wince—from the face and from the character of Jesus Christ the Lord? He is greater than the Temple, for in Him, in no symbol but in reality, abode and abides the fulness of that unnameable Being whom we name Father and God. And not only does the fulness abide, but in Him that awful Remoteness becomes for us a merciful Presence; the infinite abyss and closed sea of the divine nature hath an outlet, and becomes a 'river of water of life.' And as the ancient name of that Temple was the 'Tent of Meeting,' the place where Israel and God, in symbolical and ceremonial form, met together, so, in inmost reality in Christ's nature, Manhood and Divinity cohere and unite, and in Him all of us, the weak, the sinful, the alien, the rebellious, may meet our Father. 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' 'In this place is One greater than the Temple.'

And so this Jewish Peasant, at the very beginning of His earthly career, stands up there, in the presence of the ancestral sanctities and immemorial ceremonials which had been consecrated by all these ages and commanded by God Himself, and with autocratic hand sweeps them all on one side, as one that should draw a curtain that the statue might be seen, and remains poised Himself in the vacant place, that all eyes may look upon Him, and on Him alone. 'Destroy this Temple. . . . He spake of the temple of His body.'

Still further, notice how here we have, at the very beginning of our Lord's career, His distinct prevision of how it was all going to end. People that are willing to honour Jesus Christ, and are not willing to recognise His death as the great purpose for which He came, tell us that, like as with other reformers and heroes and martyrs, His death was the result of the failure of His purpose. And some of them talk to us very glibly, in their so-called 'Lives of Jesus Christ,' about the alteration in Christ's plan which came when He saw that His message was not going to be received. I do not enter upon all the reasons why such a construction of Christ's work cannot hold water, but here is one—for any one who believes this story before us—that at the very beginning, before He had gone half a dozen steps in His public career, when the issues of the experiment, if it was a man that was making the experiment, were all untried; when, if it were merely a martyr-enthusiast that was beginning his struggle, some flickering light of hope that He would be received of His brethren must have shone, or He would never have ventured upon the path—that then, with no mistake, with no illusion, with no expectation of a welcome and a Hosanna, but with the clearest certitude of what lay

before Him, our Lord *beheld* and accepted His Cross. Its shadow fell upon His path from the beginning, because the Cross was the purpose for which He came. 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world,' said He—when the reality of it was almost within arm's length of Him—'to bear witness to the Truth,' and His bearing witness to the truth was perfected and accomplished on the Cross. Here, at the very commencement of His career, we have it distinctly set forth, 'the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many.'

And, brethren, that fact is important, not only because it helps us to understand that His death is the centre of His work, but also because it helps us to a loving and tender thought of Him, how all His life long, with that issue distinctly before Him, He journeyed towards it of His own loving will: how every step that He took on earth's flinty roads, taken with bleeding and pure feet, He took knowing whither He was going. This Isaac climbs the mountain to the place of sacrifice, with no illusions as to what He is going up the mountain for. He knows that He goes up to be the lamb of the offering, and knowing it, He goes. Therefore let us love Him with love as persistent as was His own, who discerning the end from the beginning, willed to be born and to live because He had resolved to die, for you and me and every man.

And then, further, we have here our Lord's claim to be Himself the Agent of His own resurrection. '*I will raise it up in three days.*' Of course, in Scripture, we more frequently find the Resurrection treated as being the result of the power of God the Father. We more ordinarily read that Christ was raised; but sometimes we read, as here, that Christ rises, and we have solemn

words of His own, 'I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' Think of a man saying, 'I am going to bring My own body from the dust of death,' and think of the man who said that *doing* it. If that is true, if this prediction was uttered, and being uttered was fulfilled—what then? I do not need to answer the question. My brother, this day declares that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 'Destroy this Temple'—there is a challenge—'and in three days I will raise it up'; and He did it. And He is the Lord of the Temple as well as the Temple. Down on your knees before Him, with all your hearts and with all your confidence, and worship, and trust, and love for evermore 'the Second Man,' who 'is the Lord from Heaven!'

II. Now let us turn to the other aspects of these words. I think we see here, in the next place, a prophetic warning of the history of the men to whom He was speaking.

There must be a connection between the interpretation of the words which our Evangelist assures us is the correct one, and the interpretation which would naturally have occurred to a listener, that by 'this Temple' our Lord really meant simply the literal building in which He spoke. There is such a connection, and though our Lord did not only mean the Temple, He *did* mean the Temple. To say so is not forcing double meanings in any fast and loose fashion upon Scripture, nor playing with ambiguities, nor indulging in any of the vices to which spiritualising interpretation of Scripture leads, but it is simply grasping the central idea of the words of my text. Rightly understood they lead us to this: 'The death of Christ was the destruction of the Jewish Temple

and polity, and the raising again of Christ from the dead on the third day was the raising again of that destroyed Theocracy and Temple in a new and nobler fashion.' Let us then look for a moment, and it shall only be for a moment, at these two thoughts.

If any one had said to any of that howling mob that stood round Christ at the judgment-seat of the High Priest, and fancied themselves condemning Him to death, because He had blasphemed the Temple: 'You, at this moment, are pulling down the holy and beautiful house in which your fathers praised; and what you are doing now is the destruction of your national worship and of yourselves,' the words would have been received with incredulity; and yet they were simple truth. Christ's death destroyed that outward Temple. The veil was 'rent in twain from the top to the bottom' at the moment He died; which was the declaration indeed that henceforward the Holiest of All was patent to the foot of every man, but was also the declaration that there was no more sanctity now within those courts, and that Temple, and priesthood, and sacrifice, and altar, and ceremonial and all, were antiquated. That 'which was perfect having come,' Christ's death having realised all which Temple-worship symbolised, that which was the shadow was put away when the substance appeared.

And in another fashion, it is also true that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, inflicted by Jewish hands, was the destruction of the Jewish worship, in the way of natural sequence and of divine chastisement. When the husbandmen rejected the Son who was sent 'last of all,' there was nothing more for it but that they should be 'cast out of the vineyard,' and the firebrand which the Roman soldier, forty years afterwards,

tossed into the Holiest of All, and which burned the holy and beautiful house with fire, was lit on the day when Israel cried 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'

Oh, brethren! what a lesson it is to us all of how blind even so-called religious zeal may be; how often it is true that men in their madness and their ignorance destroy the very institutions which they are trying to conserve! How it warns us to beware lest we, unknowing what we are about, and thinking that we are fighting for the honour of God, may really all the while be but serving ourselves and rejecting His message and His Messenger!

And then let me remind you that another thing is also true, that just as the Jewish rejection of Christ was their own rejection as the people of God, and their attempted destruction of Christ the destruction of the Jewish Temple, so the other side of the truth is also here, viz. that His rising again is the restoration of the destroyed Temple in nobler and fairer form. Of course the one real Temple is the body of Jesus Christ, as we have said, where sacrifice is offered, where God dwells, where men meet with God. But in a secondary and derivative sense, in the place of the Jewish Temple has come the Christian Church, which is, in a far deeper and more inward fashion, what that ancient system aspired to be.

Christ has builded up the Church on His Resurrection. On His Resurrection, I say, for there is nothing else on which it could rest. If men ask me what is the great evidence of Christ's Resurrection, my answer is—the existence in the world of a Church. Where did it come from? How is it possible to conceive that without the Resurrection of Jesus Christ such a structure as the Christian society should have been built upon a

dead man's grave? It would have gone to pieces, as all similar associations would have gone. What had happened after that moment of depression which scattered them every man to his own, and led some of them to say, with pathetic use of the past tense to describe their vanished expectations, 'We *trusted* that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel'? What was the force that instead of driving them asunder drew them together? What was the power that, instead of quenching their almost dead hopes, caused them to flame up with renewed vigour heaven-high? How came it that that band of cowardly, dispirited Jewish peasants, who scattered in selfish fear and heart-sick disappointment, were in a few days found bearding all antagonism, and convinced that their hopes had only erred by being too faint and dim? The only answer is in their own message, which explained it all: 'Him hath God raised from the dead, whereof we are all witnesses.'

The destroyed Temple disappears, and out of the dust and smoke of the vanishing ruins there rises, beautiful and serene, though incomplete and fragmentary and defaced with many a stain, the fairer reality, the Church of the living Christ. 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'

III. Lastly, we have here a foreshadowing of our Lord's world-wide work as the Restorer of man's destructions.

Man's folly, godlessness, worldliness, lust, sin, are ever working to the destruction of all that is sacred in humanity and in life, and to the desecrating of every shrine. We ourselves, in regard to our own hearts, which are made to be the temples of the 'living God,' are ever, by our sins, shortcomings, and selfishness,

bringing pollution into the holiest of all; 'breaking down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers,' and setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy places of our hearts. We pollute them all—conscience, imagination, memory, will, intellect. How many a man listening to me now has his nature like the façade of some of our cathedrals, with the empty niches and broken statues proclaiming that wanton desecration and destruction have been busy there?

My brother! what have you done with your heart? 'Destroy this temple.' Christ spoke to men who did not know what they were doing; and He speaks to you. It is the inmost meaning of the life of many of you. Hour by hour, day by day, action by action, you are devastating and profaning the sanctities of your nature, and the sacred places there where God ought to live.

Listen to His confident promise. He knows that in me He is able to restore to more than pristine beauty all which I, by my sin, have destroyed; to reconsecrate all which I, by my profanity, have polluted; to cast out the evil deities that desecrate and deform the shrine; and to make my poor heart, if only I will let Him come in to the ruined chamber, a fairer temple and dwelling-place of God.

'In three days,' does He do it? In one sense—Yes! Thank God! the power that hallows and restores the desecrated and cast-down temple in a man's heart, was lodged in the world in those three days of death and resurrection. The fact that He 'died for our sins,' the fact that He was 'raised again for our justification,' are the plastic and architectonic powers which will build up any character into a temple of God.

And yet more than 'forty and six years' will that

temple have to be 'in building.' It is a lifelong task till the top-stone be brought forth. Only let us remember this: Christ, who is Architect and Builder, Foundation and Top-stone; ay! and Deity indwelling in the temple, and building it by His indwelling—this Christ is not one of those who 'begin to build and are not able to finish.' He realises all His plans. There are no ruined edifices in 'the City'; nor any half-finished fanes of worship within the walls of that great Jerusalem whose builder and maker is Christ.

If you will put yourselves in His hands, and trust yourselves to Him, He will take away all your incompleteness, and will make you body, soul, and spirit, temples of the Lord God; as far above the loftiest beauty and whitest sanctity of any Christian character here on earth as is the building of God, 'the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' above 'the earthly house of this tabernacle.'

He will perfect this restoring work at the last, when His Word to His servant Death, as He points him to us, shall be 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up.'

TEACHER OR SAVIOUR?

'The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.'—JOHN iii. 2.

THE connection in which the Evangelist introduces the story of Nicodemus throws great light on the aspect under which we are to regard it. He has just been saying that upon our Lord's first visit to Jerusalem at the Passover there was a considerable amount of interest excited, and a kind of imperfect faith in

Him drawn out, based solely on His miracles. He adds that this faith was regarded by Christ as unreliable; and he goes on to explain that our Lord exercised great reserve in His dealings with the persons who professed it, for the reason that 'He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.'

Now, if you note that reiteration of the word 'man,' you will understand the description which is given of the person who is next introduced. 'He knew what was in man. There was *a man* of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.' It would have been enough to have said, 'There was a Pharisee.' When John says '*a man* of the Pharisees,' he is not merely carried away by the echo in his ears of his own last words, but it is as if he had said, 'Now, here is one illustration of the sort of thing that I have been speaking about; one specimen of an imperfect faith built upon miracles; and one illustration of the way in which Jesus Christ dealt with it.'

Nicodemus was 'a Pharisee.' That tells us the school to which he belonged, and the general drift of his thought. He was 'a ruler of the Jews.' That tells us that he held an official position in the supreme court of the nation, to which the Romans had left some considerable shadow of power in ecclesiastical matters. And this man comes to Christ and acknowledges Him. Christ deals with him in a very suggestive fashion. His confession, and the way in which our Lord received it, are what I desire to consider briefly in this sermon.

I. Note then, first, this imperfect confession.

Everything about it, pretty nearly, is wrong. 'He came to Jesus by night,' half-ashamed and wholly afraid of speaking out the conviction that was work-

ing in him. He was a man in position. He could not compromise himself in the eyes of his co-Sanhedrists. 'It would be a grave thing for a man like me to be found in converse with this new Rabbi and apparent Prophet. I must go cautiously, and have regard to my reputation and my standing in the world; and shall steal to Him by night.' There is something wrong with any convictions about Jesus Christ which let themselves be huddled up in secret. The true apprehension of Him is like a fire in a man's bones, that makes him 'weary of forbearing' when he locks his lips, and forces him to speak. If Christians can be dumb, there is something dreadfully wrong with their Christianity. If they do not regard Jesus Christ in such an aspect as to oblige them to stand out in the world and say, 'Whatever anybody says or thinks about it, I am Christ's man,' then be sure that they do not yet know Him as they ought to do.

Nicodemus 'came to Jesus by night,' and therein condemned himself. He said, 'Rabbi, we know.' There is more than a *soupçon* of patronage in that. He is giving Jesus Christ a certificate, duly signed and sealed by Rabbinical authority. He evidently thinks that it is no small matter that he and some of his fellows should have been disposed to look with favour upon this new Teacher. And so he comes, if not patronising the young man, at all events extremely conscious of his own condescension in recognising Him with his 'We know.'

Had he the right to speak for any of his colleagues? If so, then at that very early stage of our Lord's ministry there was a conviction beginning to work in that body of ecclesiastics which casts a very lurid light on their subsequent proceedings. It was a good long while after, when Jesus Christ's attitude towards them had

been a little more clearly made out than it was at the beginning, that they said officially, 'As for this fellow, we know not whence He is.' They 'knew' when He did not seem to be trenching on their prerogatives, or driving His Ithuriel-spear through their traditional professions of orthodoxy and punctilious casuistries. But when He trod on their toes, when He ripped up their pretensions, when He began to show His antagonism to their formalism and traditionalism, *then* they did not know where He came from. And there are many of us who are very polite to Jesus Christ as long as He does not interfere with us, and who begin to doubt His authority when He begins to rebuke our sins.

The man that said 'We know,' and then proceeded to tell Christ the grounds upon which He was accepted by him, was not in the position which becomes sinful men drawing near to their Saviour. 'We know that Thou art a Teacher'—contrast that, with its ring of complacency, and, if not superior, at least co-ordinate, authority, with 'Jesus! Master! have mercy on me,' or with 'Lord! save or I perish,' and you get the difference between the way in which a formalist, conceited of his knowledge, and a poor, perishing sinner, conscious of his ignorance and need, go to the Saviour.

Further, this imperfect confession was of secondary value, because it was built altogether upon miraculous evidence. Now, there has been a great deal of exaggeration about the value of the evidence of miracle. The undue elevation to which it was lifted in the apologetic literature of the eighteenth century, when it was almost made out as if there was no other proof that Jesus came from God than that He wrought miracles, has naturally led, in this generation and in the last one, to an equally

exaggerated undervaluing of its worth. Jesus Christ did appeal to signs; He did also most distinctly place faith that rested merely upon miracle as second best; when He said, for instance, 'If ye believe not Me, yet believe the works.' Nicodemus says, 'We know that Thou art a Teacher sent from God, because no man can do these miracles except God be with him.' Ah! Nicodemus! did not the substance of the teaching reveal the source of the teaching even more completely than the miracles that accompanied it? Surely, if I may use an old illustration, the bell that rings in to the sermon (which is the miracles) is less conclusive as to the divine source of the teaching than is the sermon itself. Christ Himself is His own best evidence, and His words shine in their own light, and need no signs in order to authenticate their source. The signs are there, and are precious in my eyes less as credentials of His authority than as revelations of His character and His work. They are wonders; that is much. They are proofs; as I believe. But, high above both of these characteristics, they are signs of the spiritual work that He does, and manifestations of His redeeming power. And so a faith that had no ears for the ring of the divine voice in the words, and no eyes for the beauty and perfection of the character, was vulgar and low and unreliable, inasmuch as it could give no better reason for itself than that Jesus had wrought miracles.

I need not remind you of how noticeable it is that at this very early stage in our Lord's ministry there were a sufficient number of miracles done to be qualified by the Evangelist as 'many,' and to have been a very powerful factor in bringing about this real, though imperfect, faith. John has only told us of one miracle prior to this; and the other Evangelists do not touch

upon these early days of our Lord's ministry at all. So that we are to think of a whole series of works of power and supernatural grace which have found no record in these short narratives. How much more Jesus Christ was, and did, and said, than any book can ever tell! These are but parts of His ways; a whisper of His power. The fulness of it remains unrevealed after all revelation.

But the central deficiency of this confession lies in the altogether inadequate conception of Jesus Christ and His work which it embodies. 'We know that Thou art a Teacher, a miracle-worker, a man sent from God, and in communion with Him.' These are large recognitions, far too large to be spoken of any but a select few of the sons of men. But they fall miserably beneath the grandeur, and do not even approach within sight of the central characteristic, of Christ and of His work. Nicodemus is the type of large numbers of men nowadays. All the people that have a kind of loose, superficial connection with Christianity re-echo substantially his words. They compliment Jesus Christ out of His divinity and out of His redeeming work, and seem to think that they are rather conferring an honour upon Christianity when they condescend to say, 'We, the learned pundits of literature; we, the arbiters of taste; we, the guides of opinion; we, the writers in newspapers and magazines and periodicals; we, the leaders in social and philanthropic movements—we recognise that Thou art a Teacher.' Yes, brethren, and the recognition is utterly inadequate to the facts of the case, and is insult, and not recognition.

II. Let me ask you to look now, in the next place, at the way in which Jesus Christ deals with this imperfect confession.

It was a great thing for a young Rabbi from Nazareth, who had no certificate from the authorities, to find an opening thus into the very centre of the Sanhedrim. There is nothing in life, to an ardent young soul, at the beginning of his career—especially if he feels that he has a burden laid upon him to deliver to his fellows—half so sweet as the early recognition by some man of wisdom and weight and influence, that he too is a messenger from God. In later years praise and acknowledgment cloy. And one might have expected some passing word from the Master that would have expressed such a feeling as that, if He had been only a young Teacher seeking for recognition. I remember that in that strange medley of beauty and absurdity, the Koran, somewhere or other, there is an outpouring of Mahomet's heart about the blessedness of his first finding a soul that would believe in him. And it is strange that Jesus Christ had no more welcome for this man than the story tells that He had. For He meets him without a word of encouragement; without a word that seemed to recognise even a growing and a groping confidence, and yet He would not 'quench the smoking flax.' Yes! sometimes the kindest way to deal with an imperfect conception is to show unsparingly why it is imperfect; and sometimes the apparent repelling of a partial faith is truly the drawing to Himself by the Christ of the man, though his faith be not approved.

So, notice how our Lord meets the imperfections of this acknowledgment. He begins by pointing out what is the deepest and universal need of men. Nicodemus had said, 'Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God.' And Christ says, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again.' What has that

to do with Nicodemus's acknowledgment? Apparently nothing; really everything. For, if you will think for a moment, you will see how it meets it precisely, and forces the Rabbi to deepen his conception of the Lord. The first thing that you and I want, for our participation in the Kingdom of God, is a radical out-and-out change in our whole character and nature. 'Ye must be born again'; now, whatever more that means, it means, at all events, this—a thorough-going renovation and metamorphosis of a man's nature, as the sorest need that the world and all the individuals that make up the world have.

The deepest ground of that necessity lies in the fact of sin. Brother, we can only verify our Lord's assertion by honestly searching the depths of our own hearts, and looking at ourselves in the light of God. Think what is meant when we say, 'He is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' Think of that absolute purity, that, to us, awful aversion from all that is evil, from all that is sinful. Think of what sort of men they must be who can see the Lord. And then look at yourself. Are we fit to pass that threshold? Are we fit to gaze into that Face? Is it possible that we should have fellowship with Him? Oh, brethren, if we rightly meditate upon two facts, the holiness of God and our own characters, I think we shall feel that Jesus Christ has truly stated the case when He says, 'Ye must be born again.' Unless you and I can get ourselves radically changed, there is no Heaven for us; there is no fellowship with God for us. We must stand before Him, and feel that a great gulf is fixed between us and Him.

And so when a man comes with his poor little 'Thou art a Teacher,' no words are wanted in order to set in

glaring light the utter inadequacy of such a conception as that. What the world wants is not a Teacher, it is a Life-giver. What men want is not to be told the truth; they know it already. What they want is not to be told their duty; they know that too. What they want is some power that shall turn them clean round. And what each of us wants before we can see the Lord is that, if it may be, something shall lay hold of us, and utterly change our natures, and express from our hearts the black drop that lies there tainting everything.

Now, this necessity is met in Jesus Christ. For there were two 'musts' in His talk with Nicodemus, and both of them bore directly on the one purpose of deepening Nicodemus's inadequate conception of what He was and what He did. He said, 'Ye must be born again,' in order that his hearer, and we, might lay to heart this, that we need something more than a Teacher, even a Life-giver; and He said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' in order that we might all know that in Him the necessity is met, and that the Son of Man, who came down from Heaven, and is in Heaven, even whilst He is on earth, is the sole ladder by which men can ascend into Heaven and gaze upon God.

Thus it is Christ's work as Redeemer, Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, Christ's power as bringing to the world a new and holy life, and breathing it into all that trust in Him, which make the very centre of His work. Set by the side of that this other, 'Thou art a Teacher sent from God.' Ah, brethren, that will not do; it will not do for you and me! We want something a great deal deeper than that. The secret of Jesus is not disclosed until we have passed into the inner shrine, where we learn that He is the Sacrifice for the world,

and the Source and Fountain of a new life. I beseech you, take Christ's way of dealing with this certificate of His character given by the Rabbi who did not know his own necessities, and ponder it.

Mark the underlying principle which is here—viz. if you want to understand Christ you must understand sin; and whoever thinks lightly of it will think meanly of Him. An underestimate of the reality, the universality, the gravity of the fact of sin lands men in the superficial and wholly impotent conception, 'Rabbi! Thou art a Teacher sent from God.' A true knowledge of myself as a sinful man, of my need of pardon, of my need of cleansing, of my need of a new nature, which must be given from above, and cannot be evolved from within, leads me, and I pray it may lead you, to cast yourself down before Him, with no complaisant words of intellectual recognition upon your lips, but with the old cry, 'Lord! be merciful to me a sinner.'

III. And now, dear friends, one last word. Notice when and where this imperfect disciple was transformed into a courageous confessor.

We do not know what came immediately of this conversation. We only know that some considerable time after, Nicodemus had not screwed himself up to the point of acknowledging out and out, like a brave man, that he was Christ's follower; but that he timidly ventured in the Sanhedrim to slip in a remonstrance ingeniously devised to conceal his own opinions, and yet to do some benefit to Christ, when he said, 'Does our law judge any man before it hear him?' And, of course, the timid remonstrance was swept aside, as it deserved to be, by the ferocious antagonism of his co-Sanhedrists.

But when the Cross came, and it had become more

dangerous to avow discipleship, he plucked up courage, or rather courage flowed into him from that Cross, and he went boldly and 'craved the body of Jesus,' and got it, and buried it. No doubt when he looked at Jesus hanging on the Cross, he remembered that night in Jerusalem when the Lord had said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' and he remembered how He had spoken about the serpent lifted in the wilderness, and a great light blazed in upon him, which for ever ended all hesitation and timidity for him. And so he was ready to be a martyr, or anything else, for the sake of Him whom he now found to be far more than a 'Teacher,' even the Sacrifice by whose stripes he was healed.

Dear brethren, I bring that Cross to you now, and pray you to see there Christ's real work for us, and for the world. He has taught us, but He has done more. He has not only spoken, He has died. He has not only shown us the path on which to walk, He has made it possible for us to walk in it. He is not merely one amongst the noble band that have guided and inspired and instructed humanity, but He stands alone—not *a* Teacher, but *the* Redeemer, 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.'

If He is a Teacher, take His teachings, and what are they? These, that He is the Son of God; that 'He came from God'; that He 'went to God'; that He 'gives His life a ransom for many'; that He is to be the Judge of mankind; that if we trust in Him, our sins are forgiven and our nature is renewed. Do not go picking and choosing amongst His teachings, for these which I have named are as surely His as 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' or any other of the moral teachings which the

world professes to admire. Take the whole teachings of the whole Christ, and you will confess Him to be the Redeemer of your souls, and the Life-giver by whom, and by whom alone, we enter the Kingdom of God.

WIND AND SPIRIT

‘The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.’—JOHN iii. 8.

PERHAPS a gust of night wind swept round the chamber where Nicodemus sat listening to Jesus, and gave occasion for this condensed parable. But there is occasion sufficient for it in the word ‘Spirit,’ which, both in the language in which our Lord addressed the ruler of the Sanhedrim, and in that which John employed in recording the conversation, as in our own English, means both ‘spirit’ and ‘breath.’ This double signification of the word gives rise to the analogies in our text, and it also raises the question as to the precise meaning of the text. There are two alternatives, one adopted by our Authorised and Revised Version, and one which you will find relegated to the margin of the latter. We may either read ‘the wind bloweth’ or ‘the Spirit breathes.’ I must not be tempted here to enter into a discussion of the grounds upon which the one or the other of these two renderings may be preferred. Suffice it to say that I adhere to the rendering which lies before us, and find here a comparison between the salient characteristics of the physical fact and the operations of the Divine Spirit upon men’s spirits.

But, then, there is another step to be taken. Our

Lord has just been laying down the principle that like begets like, that flesh produces flesh, and spirit, spirit. And so, applying that principle, He says here, not as might be expected, 'So is the work of the Divine Spirit in begetting new life in men,' but 'So is he that is born of the Spirit.' There are three things brought into relation with one another: the physical fact; the operations of the Spirit of God, of which that physical fact in its various characteristics may be taken as a symbol; and the result of its operations in the new man who is made 'after the image of Him that created him.'

It is to the last of these that I wish to turn. Here you have the ideal of the Christian life, considered as the product of the free Spirit of God, the picture of what all Christian people have the capacity of being, the obligation to be, and are, just in the measure in which that new life, which the Spirit of God bestows, is dominant in them and moulding their character. So I take these characteristics just as they arise.

I. Here you have the freedom of the new life.

'The wind bloweth where it listeth.' Of course, in these days of weather forecasts and hoisting cones, we know that the wind is subject to as rigid physical laws as any other phenomena. But Jesus Christ speaks here, as the Bible always speaks about Nature, from two points of view—one the popular, regarding the thing as it looks on the surface, and the other what I may call the poetico-devout—finding 'sermons in stones, books in the running brooks,' and hints of the spiritual world in all the phenomena of the natural. So, just as in spite of meteorological science, there has passed into common speech the proverbial simile 'as free as the wind,' so Jesus Christ says here, 'The

wind bloweth where it listeth, . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit.' He passes by the intermediate link, the Spirit that is the parent of the life, and deals with the resulting life and declares that it is self-impelled and self-directed. Is that a characteristic to be desired or admired? Is doing as we list precisely the description of the noblest life? It is the description of the purely animal one. It is the description of an entirely ignoble and base one. It may become the description of an atrociously criminal one. But we do not generally think that a man that says 'Thus I will; thus I command; let the fact that I will it stand in the place of all reason,' is speaking from a lofty point of view.

But there are two sorts of 'listing.' There is the listing which is the yielding to the mob of ignoble passions and clamant desires of the animal nature within us, and there is the 'listing' which is obeying the impulses of a higher will, that has been blended with ours. And there you come to the secret of true freedom, which does not consist in doing as I like, but in liking to do as God wishes me to do. When our Lord says 'where it listeth,' He implies that a change has passed over a man, when that new life is born within him, whereby the law, the known will of God, is written upon his heart, and, inscribed on these fleshly tables, becomes no longer an iron force external to him, but a vital impulse within him. That is freedom, to have my better will absolutely conterminous and coincident with the will of God, so far as I know it. Just as a man is not imprisoned by limits beyond which he has no desire to go, so freedom, and elevation, and nobility come by obeying, not the commands of an external authority, but the impulse of an inward life.

‘Ye have not received the spirit of bondage,’ because God hath given us the Spirit of power, and of love, and of self-control, which keeps down that base and inferior ‘listing,’ and elevates the higher and the nobler one. ‘Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,’ because duty has become delight, and there is no desire in the new and higher nature for anything except that which God enjoins. The true freedom is when, by the direction of our will, we change ‘must’ into ‘I delight to do Thy will.’ So we are set free from the bondage and burden of a law that is external, and is not loved, and are brought into the liberty of, for dear love’s sake, doing the will of the beloved.

‘Myself shall to my darling be
Both law and impulse,’

says one of the poets about a far inferior matter. It is true in reference to the Christian life, and the ‘liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.’

But, then, in order freely to understand the sweep and the greatness of this perfect law of liberty, we must remember that the new life is implanted in us precisely in order that we may suppress, and, if need be, cast out and exorcise, that lower ‘listing,’ of which I have said that it is always ignoble and sometimes animal. For this freedom will bring with it the necessity for continual warfare against all that would limit and restrain it—namely, the passions and desires and inclinations of our baser or nobler, but godless, self. These are, as it were, deposed by the entrance of the new life. But it is a dangerous thing to keep de-throned and discrowned tyrants alive, and the best thing is to behead them, as well as to cast them from their throne. ‘If ye, through the Spirit, do put to

death the deeds' and inclinations and wills 'of the flesh, ye shall live'; and if you do not, they will live and will kill you. So the freedom of the new life is a militant freedom, and we have to fight to maintain it. As Burke said about the political realm, 'the price of liberty is eternal vigilance,' so we say about the new life of the Christian man—he is free only on condition that he keeps well under hatches the old tyrants, who are ever plotting and struggling to have dominion once again.

Still further, whilst this new life makes us free from the harshness of a law that can only proclaim duty, and also makes us free from our own baser selves, it makes us free from all human authority. The true foundation of the Christian democracy is that each individual soul has direct and immediate access to, and direct and real possession of, God, in his spirit and life. Therefore, in the measure in which we draw into ourselves the new life and the Spirit of God shall we be independent of men round us, and be able to say, 'With me it is a very small matter to be judged of you or of man's judgment.' That new life ought to make men *original*, in the deep and true sense of the word, as drawing their conceptions of duty and their methods of life, not at second hand from other men, but straight from God Himself. If the Christian Church was fuller of that divine life than it is, it would be fuller of all varieties of Christian beauty and excellence, and all these would be the work of 'that one and the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will.' If this congregation were indeed filled with the new life, there would be an exuberance of power, and a harmonious diversity of characteristics about it, and a burning up of the conventionalities of Christian pro-

fession such as we do not dream of to-day. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth.'

II. Here we have this new life in its manifestation.

'Thou hearest the sound,' or, as the Word might literally be rendered, the 'voice thereof,' from the little whisper among the young soft leaves of the opening beeches in our woods to-day, up to the typhoon that spreads devastation over leagues of tropical ocean. That voice, now a murmur, now a roar, is the only manifestation of the unseen force that sweeps around us. And if you are a Christian man or woman your new life should be thus perceptible to others, in a variety of ways, no doubt, and in many degrees of force. You cannot show its roots; you are bound to show its fruits. You cannot lay bare your spirits, and say to the world, 'Look! there is the presence of a divine germ in me,' but you can go about amongst men, and witness to the possession of it by the life that you live. There are a great many Christian people from whom, if you were to listen ever so intently, you would not hear a sigh or a ripple. There is a dead calm; the 'rushing mighty wind' has died down; and there is nothing but a greasy swell upon the windless ocean. 'The wind bloweth,' and the 'sound' is heard. The wind ceases, and there is a hideous silence. And that is the condition of many a man and woman that has a name to live and is dead. Does anybody hear the whisper of that breath in your life, Christian man? It is not for me to answer the question; it is for you to ask it and answer it for yourselves.

And Christians should be in the world, as the very breath of life amidst stagnation. When the Christian Church first sprung into being it did come into that corrupt, pestilential march of ancient heathenism with

healing on its wings, and like fresh air from the pure hills into some fever-stricken district. Wherever there has been a new outburst, in the experience of individuals and of churches, of that divine life, there has come, and the world has felt that there has come, a new force that breathes over the dry bones, and they live. Alas, alas! that so frequently the professing Christian Church has ceased to discharge its plain function, to breathe on the slain that they may live.

They are curing, or say they are curing, consumption nowadays, by taking the patient and keeping him in the open air, and letting the wind of heaven blow freely about him. That, and not shutting people in warm chambers, and coddling them with the prescriptions of social and political reformation, that is the cure for the world's diseases. Wherever the new life is vigorous in men, men will hear the sound thereof, and recognise that it comes from heaven.

III. Lastly, here we have the new life in its double secret.

I have been saying that it has a means of manifestation which all Christian people are bound to exemplify. But our Lord draws a broad distinction between that which can be manifested and that which cannot. As I said, you can show the leaves and the fruits; the roots are covered. 'Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth.'

The origin of that new life is 'hid with Christ in God.' And so, since we are not dependent upon external things for the communication of the life, we should not be dependent upon them for its continuation and its nourishment, and we should realise that, if we are Christians, we are living in two regions, and, though as regards the surface life we belong to the

things of time, as regards the deepest life, we belong to eternity. All the surface springs may run dry. What then? As long as there is a deep-seated fountain that comes welling up, the fields will be green, and we may laugh at famine and drought. If it be true that 'our lives are hid with Christ in God,' then it ought to be true that the nourishments, as well as the direction and impulse of them, are drawn from Him, and that we seek not so much for the abundance of the things that minister to the external as for the fulness of those that sustain the inward, the true life, the life of Christ in the soul.

The world does not know where that Christian life comes from. If you are a Christian, you ought to bear in your character a certain indefinable something that will suggest to the people round you that the secret power of your life is other than the power which moulds theirs. You may be naturalised, and you may speak fairly well the language of the country in which you are a sojourner, but there ought to be something in your accent which tells where you come from, and betrays the foreigner. We ought to move amongst men, having about us that which cannot be explained by what is enough to explain their lives. A Christian life should be the manifestation to the world of the supernatural.

They 'know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth.' No; that new life in its feeblest infancy, and before it speaks, if I may so say, is, by its very existence, a prophet, and declares that there must be, beyond this 'bank and shoal of time,' a region to which it is native, and in which it may grow to maturity. You will find in your greenhouses exotics that stand there, after all your pains and coals, stunted, and

seeming to sigh for the tropical heat which is their home. The earnest of our inheritance, the first-fruits of the Spirit, the Christian life which originated in, and is sustained by, the flowing of the divine life into us, demands that, somehow or other, the stunted plant should be lifted and removed into that 'higher house where these are planted'—and what shall be the spread of its branches, and the lustre of its leaves, and what the gorgeousness of its blossoms, and what the perennial sweetness of its fruits then and there, 'it doth not yet appear.'

They 'know not whither it goeth.' And even those who themselves possess it know not, nor shall know, through the ages of a progressive approximation to the ever-approached and never-attained perfection. 'This spake He of the Holy Ghost, which they that believe on Him should receive.' Trust Christ, and 'the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus shall make you free from the law of sin and death.'

THE BRAZEN SERPENT

'Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.'—JOHN iii. 14.

THIS is the second of the instances in this Gospel in which our Lord lays His hand upon an institution or incident of the Old Testament, as shadowing forth some aspect of His work. In the first of these instances, under the image of the ladder that Jacob saw, our Lord presented Himself as the sole medium of communication between heaven and earth; here He goes a step further into the heart of His work, and under the image, very eloquent to the Pharisee to whom He

was speaking, of the brazen serpent lifted up on the pole in the desert, proclaims Himself as the medium of healing and of life to a poisoned world.

Now, Nicodemus has a great many followers to-day. He took up a position which many take up. He recognised Christ as a Teacher, and was willing to accord to the almost unknown young man from Galilee the coveted title of 'Rabbi.' He came to Him with a little touch of condescension, and evidently thought that for him, a ruler of the Jews, a member of the upper and educated classes, to be willing to speak of Jesus as a Teacher, was an endorsement that the young aspirant might be gratified to receive. 'Rabbi, *we* know that Thou art a Teacher sent from God'—but he stopped there. He is not the only one who compliments Jesus Christ, while he degrades Him from His unique position. Now, to this inadequate conception of our Lord's Person and work, Christ opposed the solemn insistence on the incapacity of human nature as it is, to enter into communion with, and submission to, God. And then He passes on to speak—in precise parallelism with the position that He took up when He likened Himself to the Ladder of Jacob's vision—of Himself as being the Son of Man that came down from Heaven, and therefore is able to reveal heavenly things. In my text He further unveils in symbol the mystery and dignity of His Person and of His work, whilst He speaks of a mysterious lifting up of this Son of Man who came down from heaven. These are the truths that the conception of Christ as a great Teacher needs for its completion; the contrariety of human nature with the divine will, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Crucifixion of the Incarnate Son. And so we have here three points, to which I desire to turn, as setting

forth the conception of His own work which Jesus Christ presented as completing the conception of it, to which Nicodemus had attained.

I. There is, first, the lifting up of the Son of Man.

Now, of course, the sole purpose of setting that brazen serpent on the pole was to render it conspicuous, and all that Nicodemus could *then* understand by the symbol was that, in some unknown way, this heaven-descended Son of Man should be set forth before Israel and the world as being the Healer of all their diseases. But we are wiser, after the event, than the ruler of the Jews could be at the threshold of Christ's ministry. We have also to remember that this is not the only occasion, though it is the first, on which our Lord used this very significant expression. For twice over in this Gospel we find it upon His lips—once when, addressing the unbelieving multitude, He says 'When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He'; and once when in soliloquy, close on Calvary, He says, as the vision of a world flocking to Him rises before Him on occasion of the wish of a few Greek proselytes to see Him, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' We do not need, though we have, the Evangelist's commentary, 'this He spake signifying what death He should die.'

So, if we accept the historical veracity of this Gospel, we here perceive Jesus Christ, at the very beginning of His career, and before the dispositions of the nation towards Him had developed themselves in action, discerning its end, and seeing, gaunt and grim before Him, the Cross that was lifted up on Calvary. Enthusiasts and philanthropists and apostles of all sorts, in the regions of science and beneficence and morals and religion, begin their career with trusting that their

‘brethren should have understood’ that God was speaking through them. But no illusion of that sort, according to these Evangelists, drew Jesus Christ out of His seclusion at Nazareth and impelled Him on His career. From the beginning He knew that the Cross was to be the end. That Cross was not to Him a necessity, accepted as the price of faithfulness in doing His work, so that His attitude was, ‘I will speak what is in Me, though I die for it,’ but it was to Him the very heart of the work which He came to do. Therefore, after He had said to the ruler of the Jews that the Son of Man, as descended from Heaven, was able to *speak* of heavenly things, He added the deeper necessity, He ‘must be lifted up.’ Where lay the ‘must’? In the requirement of the work which He had set Himself to do. Beneath this great saying there lies a pathetic, stern, true conception of the condition of human nature. That desert encampment, with the poisoned men dying on every hand, is the emblem under which Jesus Christ, the gentlest and the sweetest soul that ever lived, looked out upon humanity. And it was because the facts of human nature called for something far more than a teacher that He said ‘the Son of Man must be lifted up.’ For what they needed, and what He had set Himself to bring, could only be brought by One who yielded Himself up for the sins of the whole world.

But that ‘must,’ which thus arose from the requirements of the task that He had set before Him, had its source in His own heart; it was no necessity imposed upon Him from without. True, it was a necessity laid on Him by filial obedience, but also true, it was the necessity accepted by Him in pursuance of the impulse of His own heart. He must die because He must save,

and He must save because He loved. So He was not nailed to the Cross by the nails and hammers of the Roman soldiers, and the taunt that was flung at Him as He hung there had a deeper meaning, as scoffs thrown at Him and His cause ordinarily have, than the scoffers understood: 'He saved others,' and therefore 'Himself He cannot save.'

So here we have Christ accepting, as well as discerning, the Cross. And we have more than that. We have Christ looking at the Cross as being, not humiliation, but exaltation. 'The Son of Man must be lifted up.' And what does that mean? It means the same thing that He said when, near the end, He declared, 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.' We are accustomed to speak—and we speak rightly—of His death as being the lowest point of the humiliation which was inherent in the very fact of His humanity. He condescended to be born; He stooped yet more to die. But whilst that is true, the other side is also true—that in the Cross Christ is lifted up, and that it is His Throne. For what see we there? The highest exhibition, the tenderest revelation, of His perfect love. And what see we there besides? The supreme manifestation of the highest power.

'Twas great to speak a world from nought,
'Tis greater to redeem.'

To save humanity, to make it possible that men should receive that second birth, and should enter into the Kingdom of God—that was a greater work, because a work not only of creation, but of restoration, than it was to send forth the stars on their courses and to 'preserve' the ancient heavens 'from wrong.' There is

a revelation of divine might when we 'lift up our eyes on high,' and see how, 'because He is great in power, not one faileth.' But there is a mightier revelation of divine power when we see how, from amidst the ruins of humanity, He can restore the divine image, and piece together, as it were, without sign of flaw or crack or one fragment wanting, the fair image that was shattered into fragments by the blow of Sin's heavy mace. Power in its highest operation, power in its tenderest efficacy, power in its widest sweep, are set forth on the Cross of Christ, and that weak Man hanging there, dying in the dark, is 'the power of God' as well as 'the wisdom of God.' The Cross is Christ's Throne, but it is His sovereign manifestation of love and power only if it is what, as I believe He told us it was, and what His servants from His lips caught the interpretation of it as being, the death for the sins of the sin-stricken world. Unless we can believe that, when He died, He died for us, I know not why Christ's death should appeal to our love. But if we recognise—as I pray that we all may recognise—that our deep need for something far more than Teacher or Pattern has been met in that great 'one Sacrifice for sins for ever,' then the magnetism of the Cross begins to tell, and we understand what He meant when He said, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Brethren, the Cross is His Throne, from which He rules the world, and if you strike His sacrifice for sins out of your conception of His work, you have robbed Him of sovereignty, and taken out of His hand the sceptre by which He governs the hearts and wills of rebellious and restored men.

II. Notice, again, how we have here the look at the uplifted Son of Man,

I do not need to paint for you what your own imaginations can sufficiently paint for yourselves—the scene in the wilderness where the dying men from the very outskirts of the camp could turn a filmy eye to the brazen serpent hanging in their midst. That look is the symbol of what we need, in order that the life-giving power of Christ should enter into our death. There is no better description of the act of Christian faith than that picture of the dying Israelite turning his languid eye to the symbol of healing and life. That trust which Jesus emphasises here in ‘whosoever *believeth* on Him,’ He opposes very emphatically to Nicodemus’s confession, ‘We know that Thou art a Teacher.’ We know—you have to go a step further, Nicodemus! ‘We know’; well and good, but are you included in ‘whosoever *believeth*’? Faith is an advance on credence. There is an intellectual side to it, but its essence is what is the essence of trust always, the act of the will throwing itself on that which is discerned to be trustworthy. You know that a given man is reliable—that is not relying on him. You have to go a step further. And so, dear brethren, you may believe thirty-nine or thirty-nine thousand Articles with an unfaltering credence, and you may be as far away from faith as if you did not believe one of them. There may be a perfect belief and an absolute want of faith. And on the other hand, blessed be God! there may be a real and an operative trust with a very imperfect or mistaken creed. The wild flowers on the rock bloom fair and bright, though they have scarcely any soil in which to strike their roots, and the plants in the most fertile garden may fail to produce flowers and seed. So trust and credence are not always of the same magnitude.

This trust is no arbitrary condition. The Israelite

was bid to turn to the brazen serpent. There was no connection between his look and his healing, except in so far as the symbol was a help to, and looking at it was a test of, his faith in the healing power of God. But it is no arbitrary appointment, as many people often think it is, which connects inseparably together the look of faith and the eternal life that Christ gives. For seeing that salvation is no mere external gift of shutting up some outward Hell and opening the door to some outward Heaven, but is a state of heart and mind, of relation to God, the only way by which that salvation can come into a man's heart is that he, knowing his need of it, shall trust Christ, and through Him the new life will flow into his heart. Faith is trust, and trust is the stretching out of the hand to take the precious gift, the opening of the heart for the influx of the grace, the eating of the bread, the drinking of the water, of life.

It is the only possible condition. God forbid that I should even seem to depreciate other forms of healing men's evils and redressing men's wrongs, and diminishing the sorrows of humanity! We welcome them all; but education, art, culture, refinement, improved environment, bettered social and political conditions, whilst they do a great deal, do not go down to the bottom of the necessity. And after you have built your colleges and art museums and stately pleasure-houses, and set every man in an environment that is suited to develop him, you will find out what surely the world might have found out already, that, as in some stately palace built in the Campagna, the malaria is in the air, and steals in at the windows, and infects all the inhabitants. Thank God for all these other things! but you cannot heal a man who has poison in

his veins by administering cosmetics, and you cannot put out Vesuvius with a jugful of water. If the camp is to be healed, the Christ must be lifted up.

III. And now, lastly, here we have the life that comes with a look at the lifted-up Son of Man.

Those of you who are using the Revised Version will see that there is a little change made here, partly by the exclusion of a clause and partly by changing the order of the words. The alteration is not only nearer the original text, but brings out a striking thought. It reads that 'whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life.' Now, it is far too late a period of my discourse to enlarge upon all that these great words would suggest to us, but let me just, in a sentence or two, mark the salient points.

'Eternal life'; do not bring that down to the narrow and inadequate conception of unending existence. It involves that, but it means a great deal more. It means a life of such a sort as is worth calling life, which is a life in union with God, and therefore full of blessedness, full of purity, full of satisfaction, full of desire and aspiration, and all these with the stamp of unendingness deeply impressed upon them. And that is what comes to us through the look. Not only is the process of dying arrested, but there is substituted for it a new process of growing possession of a new life. You 'must be born again,' Christ had been saying to Nicodemus. The change that passes upon a man when once he has anchored his trust on Jesus Christ, the uplifted Son of Man, is so profound that it is nothing else than a new birth, and a new life comes into his veins untainted by the poison, and with no proclivity to death.

'May have eternal life'—now, here, on the instant.

That eternal life is no future gift to be bestowed upon mortal men when they have passed through the agony of death, but it is a gift which comes to us here, and may come to any man on the instant of his looking to Jesus Christ.

‘May in Him have eternal life’—union with Christ by faith, that profound incorporation—if I may use the word—into Him, which the New Testament sets forth in all sorts of aspects as the very foundation of the blessings of Christianity; that union is the condition of eternal life. So, dear brethren, we all need that the poison shall be cast out of our veins. We all need that the tendency downwards to a condition which can only be described as death may be arrested, and the motion reversed. We all need that our knowledge shall be vitalised into faith. We all need that the past shall be forgiven, and the power of sin upon us in the present shall be cancelled. ‘The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,’ because it was shed for the remission of the sins of the many, and is transfused, an untainted principle of life, into our veins. What Jesus said to Nicodemus by night in that quiet chamber in Jerusalem, what He said in effect and act upon the Cross, when uplifted there, is what He says to each of us from the Throne where He is now lifted up: ‘Who-soever believeth shall in Me have eternal life.’ Take Him at His word, and you will find that it is true.

CHRIST'S MUSTS

‘... Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.’—JOHN iii. 14.

I HAVE chosen this text for the sake of one word in it, that solemn ‘must’ which was so often on our

Lord's lips. I have no purpose of dealing with the remainder of this clause, nor indeed with it at all, except as one instance of His use of the expression. But I have felt it might be interesting, and might set old truths in a brighter light, if we gather together the instances in which Christ speaks of the great necessity which dominated His life, and shaped even small acts.

The expression is most frequently used in reference to the Passion and Resurrection. There are many instances in the Gospels, in which He speaks of that *must*. The first of these is that of my text. Then there is another class, of which His word to His mother when a twelve-year-old child may be taken as a type: 'Wist ye not that I *must* be about My Father's business?' where the mysterious consciousness of a special relation to God in the child's heart drew Him to the Temple and to His Father's work. Other similar instances are those in which He responded to the multitude when they wanted to keep Him to themselves: 'I *must* preach in other cities also'; or as when He said, 'I *must* work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day.'

Yet another aspect of the same necessity is presented when, looking far beyond the earthly work and suffering, He discerned the future triumph which was to be the issue of these, and said, 'Other sheep I have . . . them also I *must* bring.'

And yet another is in reference to a very small matter: His selection of a place for a few hours' rest on His last fateful journey to Jerusalem, when He said, 'Zaccheus, . . . to-day I *must* abide at thy house.'

Now, if we put these instances together, we shall get some precious glimpses into our Lord's heart, and His view of life.

I. Here we see Christ recognising and accepting the necessity for His death.

My text, if we accept John's Gospel, contributes an altogether new element to our conception of our Lord as announcing His death. For the other three Gospels lay emphasis on it as being part of His teaching, especially during the later stage of His ministry. But it does not follow that He began to think about it or to see it, when He began to speak about it. There are reasons for the earlier comparative reticence, and there is no ground for the conclusion that then first began to dawn upon a disappointed enthusiast the grim reality that His work was not going to prosper, and that martyrdom was necessary. That is a notion that has been frequently upheld of late years, but to me it seems altogether incongruous with the facts of the case. And, if John's Gospel is a true record, that theory is shivered against this text, which represents Him at the very beginning of His career—the time when, according to that other theory, He was full of the usual buoyant and baseless anticipations of a reformer commencing His course—as telling Nicodemus, 'Even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up.' In like manner, in the previous chapter of this same Gospel, we have the significant though enigmatical utterance: 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up'; with the Evangelist's authoritative comment: 'He spake of the Temple of His body.' So, from the beginning of His career, the end was clear before Him.

And why *must* He go to the Cross? Not merely, as the other Evangelists put it, in order that 'it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the prophets.' It was not that Jesus must die because the prophets had said that Messiah should, but that the prophets had

said that Messiah should because Jesus must. There was a far deeper necessity than the fulfilment of any prophetic utterance, even the necessity which shaped that utterance. The work of Jesus Christ could not be done unless He died. He could not be the Saviour of the world unless He was the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

We cannot see all the grounds of that solemn imperative, but this we can see, that it was because of the requirements of the divine righteousness, and because of the necessities of sinful men. And so Christ's was no martyr's death, who had to die as the penalty of the faithful discharge of His duty. It was not the penalty that He paid for doing His work, but it was the work itself. Not that gracious life, nor 'the loveliness of perfect deeds,' nor His words of sweet wisdom, nor His acts of transcendent power, equalled only by the pity that moved the power, completed His task, but He 'came to give His life a ransom for many.'

'Must' is a hard word. It may express an unwelcome necessity. Was this necessity unwelcome? When He said, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up,' was He shrinking, or reluctantly submitting? Ah, no! He *must* die because He *would* save, and He *would* save because He *did* love. His filial obedience to God coincided with His pity for men: and not merely in obedience to the requirements of the divine righteousness, but in compassion for the necessities of sinners, necessity was laid upon Him.

Oh, brethren! nothing held Christ to the Cross but His own desire to save us. Neither priests nor Romans carried Him thither. What fastened Him to it was not the nails driven by rude hands. And the reason

why He did not, as the taunters bade Him do, come down from it, was neither a physical nor a moral necessity unwelcome to Himself, but the yielding of His own will to do all which was needed for man's salvation.

This sacrifice was bound to the altar by the cords of love. We have heard of martyrs who have refused to be tied to the stake, and have kept themselves motionless in the centre of the fierce flames by the force of their wills. Jesus Christ fastened Himself to the Cross and died because He would.

And, oh! if we think of that sweet, serene life as having clear before it from the very first steps that grim end, how infinitely it gains in pathetic beauty and in heart-touchingness! What wonderful self-abnegation! How he was at leisure from Himself, with a heart of pity for every sorrow, and loins girt for all service, though during all His life the Cross closed the vista! Think that human shrinking was felt by Him, think that it was so held back that His purpose never faltered, think that each of us may say, 'He *must* die because He *would* save me'; and then ask, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?'

II. In a second class of these utterances, we see Christ impelled by filial obedience and the consciousness of His mission.

'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' That was a strange utterance for a boy of twelve. It seems to negative the supposition that what is called the 'Messianic consciousness' dawned upon Jesus Christ first after His baptism and the descent of the Spirit. But however that may be, it and the similar passages to which I have already referred, bearing upon His discharge of His work prior

to His death, teach that the necessity was an inward necessity springing from His consciousness of Sonship, and His recognition of the work that He had to do. And so He is our great Example of spontaneous obedience, which does violence to itself if it does not obey. It was instinct that sent the boy into the Temple. Where should a Son be but in His Father's house? How could He not be doing His Father's business?

Thus He stands before us, the pattern for the only obedience that is worth calling so, the obedience which would be pained and ill at ease unless it were doing the work of God. Religion is meant to make it a second nature, or, as I have ventured to call it, an instinct—a spontaneous, uncalculating, irrepressible desire—to be in fellowship with God, and to be doing His will. That is the meaning of our Christianity. There is no obedience in reluctant obedience; forced service is slavery, not service. Christianity is given for the specific purpose that it may bring us so into touch with Jesus Christ as that the mind which was in Him may be in us; and that we too may be able to say, with a kind of wonder that people should have expected to find us in any other place, or doing anything else, ‘Wist ye not that because I am a Son, *I* must be about my Father's business?’ As certainly as the sunflower follows the sun, so certainly will a man animated by the mind that was in Jesus Christ, like Him find his very life's breath in doing the Father's will.

So then, brethren, what about our grudging service? What about our reluctant obedience? What about the widespread mistake that religion prohibits wished-for things and enforces unwelcome duties? If my Christianity does not make me recoil from what it

forbids, and spring eagerly to what it commends, my Christianity is of very little use. If when in the Temple we are like idle boys in school, always casting glances at the clock and the door, and wishing ourselves outside, we may just as well be out as in. Glad obedience is true obedience. Only he who can say, 'Thy law is within my heart, and I do Thy will because I love Thee, and cannot but do as Thou desirest,' has found the joy possible to a Christian life. It is not 'harsh and crabbed,' as those that look upon it from the outside may 'suppose,' but musical and full of sweetness. There is nothing more blessed than when 'I choose' covers exactly the same ground as 'I ought.' And when duty is delight, delight will never become disgust, nor joy pass away.

III. We see, in yet another use of this great 'must,' Christ anticipating His future triumph.

'Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.' Striking as these words are in themselves, they are still more striking when we notice their connection; for they follow immediately upon His utterance about laying down His life for the sheep. So, then, this was a work beyond the Cross, and whatever it was, it was to be done after He had died.

I need not point out to you how far afield Christ's vision goes out into the dim, waste places, where on the dark mountains the straying sheep are torn and frightened and starving. I need not dwell upon how far ahead in the future His glance travels, or how magnificent and how rebuking to our petty narrowness this great word is. 'There shall be one *flock*' (not fold); and they shall be one, not because they are

within the bounds of any visible 'fold,' but because they are gathered round the one Shepherd, and in their common relation to Him are knit together in unity.

But what sort of a Man is this who considers that His widest work is to be done by Him after He is dead? 'Them also I *must* bring.' Thou? how? when? Surely such words as these, side by side with a clear prevision of the death that was so soon to come, are either meaningless or the utterance of an arrogance bordering on insanity, or they anticipate what an Evangelist declares did take place—that the Lord was 'taken up into heaven and sat at the right hand of God,' whilst His servants 'went everywhere preaching the Word, the Lord also working with them and confirming the Word' with the signs He wrought.

'Them also I must bring.' That is not merely a necessity rooted in the nature of God and the wants of men. It is not merely a necessity springing from Christ's filial obedience and sense of a mission; but it is a 'must' of destiny, a 'must' which recognises the sure results of His passion; a 'must' which implies the power of the Cross to be the reconciliation of the world. And so for all pessimistic thoughts to-day, or at any time, and when Christian men's hearts may be trembling for the Ark of God—although, perhaps, there may be little reason for the tremor—and in the face of all blatant antagonisms and of proud Goliaths despising the 'foolishness of preaching,' we fall back upon Christ's great 'must.' It is written in the councils of Heaven more unchangeably than the heavens; it is guaranteed by the power of the Cross; it is certain, by the eternal life of the crucified Saviour, that He

will one day be the King of humanity, and *must* bring His wandering sheep to couch in peace, one flock round one Shepherd.

IV. Lastly, we have Christ applying the greatest principle to the smallest duty.

‘Zaccheus! make haste and come down; to-day I *must* abide in thy house.’ Why *must* He? Because Zaccheus was to be saved, and was worth saving. What was the ‘*must*’? To stop for an hour or two on His road to the Cross. So He teaches us that in a life penetrated by the thought of the divine will, which we gladly obey, there are no things too great, and none too trivial, to be brought under the dominion of that law, and to be regulated by that divine necessity. Obedience is obedience, whether in large things or in small. There is no scale of magnitude applicable to the distinction between God’s will and that which is not God’s will. Gravitation rules the motes that dance in the sunshine as well as the mass of Jupiter. A triangle with its apex in the sun, and its base beyond the solar system, has the same properties and comes under the same laws as one that a schoolboy scrawls upon his slate. God’s truth is not too great to rule the smallest duties. The star in the East was a guide to the humble house at Bethlehem, and there are starry truths high in the heavens that avail for our guidance in the smallest acts of life.

So, brethren, bring your doings under that all-embracing law of duty—duty, which is the heathen expression for the will of God. There are great regions of life in which lower necessities have play. Circumstances, our past, bias and temper, relationship, friendship, civic duty, and the like—all these bring their necessities; but let us think of them all as being,

what indeed they are, manifestations to us of the will of our Father. There are great tracts of life in which either of two courses may be right, and we are left to the decision of choice rather than of duty; but high above all these, let us see towering that divine necessity. It is a daily struggle to bring 'I will' to coincide with 'I ought'; and there is only one adequate and always powerful way of securing that coincidence, and that is to keep close to Jesus Christ and to drink in His spirit. Then, when duty and delight are conterminous, 'the rough places will be plain, and the crooked things straight, and every mountain shall be brought low, and every valley shall be exalted,' and life will be blessed, and service will be freedom. Joy and liberty and power and peace will fill our hearts when this is the law of our being: 'All that the Lord hath spoken, that *must* I do.'

THE LAKE AND THE RIVER

'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'—JOHN iii. 16.

I VENTURE to say that my text shows us a lake, a river, a pitcher, and a draught. 'God so loved the world'—that is the lake. A lake makes a river for itself—'God so loved the world that He *gave* His . . . Son.' But the river does not quench any one's thirst unless he has something to lift the water with: 'God so loved the world that He gave His . . . Son, that whosoever *believeth* on Him.' Last comes the draught: 'shall not perish, but have *everlasting life*.'

I. The great lake, God's love.

Before Jesus Christ came into this world no one

ever dreamt of saying 'God *loves*.' Some of the Old Testament psalmists had glimpses of that truth and came pretty near expressing it. But among all the 'gods many and lords many,' there were lustful gods and beautiful gods, and idle gods, and fighting gods and peaceful gods: but not one of whom worshippers said, 'He loves.' Once it was a new and almost incredible message, but we have grown accustomed to it, and it is not strange any more to us. But if we would try to think of what it means, the whole truth would flash up into fresh newness, and all the miseries and sorrows and perplexities of our lives would drift away down the wind, and we should be no more troubled with them. 'God loves' is the greatest thing that can be said by lips.

'God . . . loved the world.' Now when we speak of loving a number of individuals—the broader the stream, the shallower it is, is it not? The most intense patriot in England does not love her one ten-thousandth part as well as he loves his own little girl. When we think or feel anything about a great multitude of people, it is like looking at a forest. We do not see the trees, we see the whole wood. But that is not how God loves the world. Suppose I said that I loved the people in India, I should not mean by that that I had any feeling about any individual soul of all those dusky millions, but only that I massed them all together; or made what people call a generalisation of them. But that is not the way in which God loves. He loves all because He loves each. And when we say, 'God so loved the world,' we have to break up the mass into its atoms, and to think of each atom as being an object of His love. We all stand out in God's love just as we should do to one another's eyes, if we were on the top of a

mountain-ridge with a clear sunset sky behind us. Each little black dot of the long procession would be separately visible. And we all stand out like that, every man of us isolated, and getting as much of the love of God as if there was not another creature in the whole universe but God and ourselves. Have you ever realised that when we say, 'He loved the world,' that really means, as far as each of us is concerned, He loves *me*? And just as the whole beams of the sun come pouring down into every eye of the crowd that is looking up to it, so the whole love of God pours down, not upon a multitude, an abstraction, a community, but upon every single soul that makes up that community. He loves us all because He loves us each. We shall never get all the good of that thought until we translate it, and lay it upon our hearts. It is all very well to say, 'Ah yes! God is love,' and it is all very well to say He loves 'the world.' But I will tell you what is a great deal better—to say—what Paul said—'Who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.'

Now, there is one other suggestion that I would make to you before I go on, and that is that all through the New Testament, but especially in John's Gospel, 'the world' does not only mean men, but *sinful* men, men separated from God. And the great and blessed truth taught here is that, however I may drag myself away from God, I cannot drive Him away from me, and that however little I may care for Him, or love Him, or think about Him, it does not make one hairs-breadth of difference as to the fact that He loves me. I know, of course, that if a man does not love Him back again, God's love has to take shapes that it would not otherwise take, which may be extremely inconvenient for the man. But though the shape may alter,

must alter, the fact remains; and every sinful soul on the earth, including Judas Iscariot — who is said to head the list of crimes—has God's love resting upon him.

II. The river.

Now, to go back to my metaphor, the lake makes a river. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.'

So then, it was not Christ's death that turned God from hating and being angry, but it was God's love that appointed Christ's death. If you will only remember that, a great many of the shallow and popular objections to the great doctrine of the Atonement disappear at once. 'God so loved . . . that He gave.' But some people say that when we preach that Jesus Christ died for our sins, that God's wrath might not fall upon men, our teaching is immoral, because it means 'Christ came, and so God loved.' It is the other way about, friend. 'God so loved . . . that He gave.'

But now let me carry you back to the Old Testament. Do you remember the story of the father taking his boy who carried the bundle of wood and the fire, and tramping over the mountains till they reached the place where the sacrifice was to be offered? Do you remember the boy's question that brings tears quickly to the reader's eyes: 'Here is the wood, and here is the fire, where is the lamb'? Do you not think it would be hard for the father to steady his voice and say, 'My son, God will provide the lamb'? And do you remember the end of that story? 'The Angel of the Lord said unto Abraham, Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not *withheld* thy son, *thine only son*, from Me, therefore blessing I will bless thee,' etc. Remember that one of the Apostles said, using the

very same word that is used in Genesis as to Abraham's giving up his son to God, '*He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to the death for us all.*' Does not that point to a mysterious parallel? Somehow or other—we have no right to attempt to say how—somehow or other, God not only *sent* His Son, as it is said in the next verse to my text, but far more tenderly, wonderfully, pathetically, God *gave*—gave up His Son, and the sacrifice was enhanced, because it was His only begotten Son.

Ah! dear brethren, do not let us be afraid of following out all that is included in that great word, '*God . . . loved the world.*' For there is no love which does not delight in giving, and there is no love that does not delight in depriving itself, in some fashion, of what it gives. And I, for my part, believe that Paul's words are to be taken in all their blessed depth and wonderfulness of meaning when he says, '*He gave up*'—as well as *gave*—'*Him to the death for us all.*'

And now, do you not think that we are able in some measure to estimate the greatness of that little word '*so*'? '*God so loved*'—so deeply, so holily, so perfectly—that He '*gave His only begotten Son*'; and the gift of that Son is, as it were, the river by which the love of God comes to every soul in the world.

Now there are a great many people who would like to put the middle part of this great text of ours into a parenthesis. They say that we should bring the first words and the last words of this text together, and never mind all that lies between. People who do not like the doctrine of the Cross would say, '*God so loved the world that He gave . . . everlasting life*'; and there an end. '*If there is a God, and if He loves the world, why cannot He save the world without more*

ado? There is no need for these interposed clauses. God so loved the world that everybody will go to heaven'—that is the gospel of a great many of you; and it is the gospel of a great many wise and learned people. But it is not John's Gospel, and it is not Christ's Gospel. The beginning and the end of the text cannot be buckled up together in that rough-and-ready fashion. They have to be linked by a chain; and there are two links in the chain: God forges the one, and we have to forge the other. 'God so loved the world that He gave'—then He has done His work. 'That whosoever believeth'—that is your work. And it is in vain that God forges *His* link, unless you will forge *yours* and link it up to His. 'God so loved the world,' that is step number one in the process; 'that He gave,' that is step number two; and then there comes another 'that'—'that whosoever believeth,' that is step number three; and they are all needed before you come to number four, which is the landing-place and not a step—'should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

III. The pitcher.

I come to what I called the pitcher, with which we draw the water for our own use—'that whosoever believeth.' You perhaps say, 'Yes, I believe. I accept every word of the Gospel, I quite believe that Jesus Christ died, as a matter of history; and I quite believe that He died for men's sins.' And what then? Is that what Jesus Christ meant by believing? To believe *about* Him is not to believe *on* Him; and unless you believe *on* Him you will get no good out of Him. There is the lake, and the river must flow past the shanties in the clearing in the forest, if the men there are to drink. But it may flow past their doors, as

broad as the Mississippi, and as deep as the ocean; but they will perish with thirst, unless they dip in their hands, like Gideon's men, and carry the water to their own lips. Dear friend, what you have to do—and your soul's salvation, and your peace and joy and nobleness in this life and in the next depend absolutely upon it—is simply to trust in Jesus Christ and His death for your sins.

I sometimes wish we had never heard that word 'faith.' For as soon as we begin to talk about 'faith,' people begin to think that we are away up in some theological region far above everyday life. Suppose we try to bring it down a little nearer to our businesses and bosoms, and instead of using a word that is kept sacred for employment in religious matters, and saying 'faith,' we say 'trust.' That is what you give to your wives and husbands, is it not? And that is exactly what you have to give to Jesus Christ, simply to lay hold of Him as a man lays hold of the heart that loves him, and leans his whole weight upon it. Lean hard on Him, hang on Him, or, to take the other metaphor that is one of the Old Testament words for trust, 'flee for refuge' to Him. Fancy a man with the avenger of blood at his back, and the point of the pursuer's spear almost pricking his spine—don't you think he would make for the City of Refuge with some speed? That is what you have to do. He that believeth, and by trust lays hold of the Hand that holds him up, will never fall; and he that does not lay hold of that Hand will never stand, to say nothing of rising. And so by these two links God's love of the world is connected with the salvation of the world.

IV. The draught.

Finally, we have here the draught of living water.

Did you ever think why our text puts 'should not perish' first? Is it not because, unless we put our trust in Him, we shall certainly perish, and because, therefore, that certainty of perishing must be averted before we can have 'everlasting life'?

Now I am not going to enlarge on these two solemn expressions, 'perishing' and 'everlasting life.' I only say this: men do not need to wait until they die before they 'perish.' There are men and women here now who are dead—dead while they live, and when they come to die, the perishing, which is condemnation and ruin, will only be the making visible, in another condition of life, of what is the fact to-day. Dear brethren, you do not need to die in order to perish in your sins, and, blessed be God, you can have everlasting life before you die. You can have it now, and there is only one way to have it, and that is to lay hold of Him who is the Life. And when you have Jesus Christ in your heart, whom you will be sure to have if you trust Him, then you will have life—life eternal, here and now, and death will only make manifest the eternal life which you had while you were alive here, and will perfect it in fashions that we do not yet know anything about.

Only remember, as I have been trying to show you, the order that runs through this text. Remember the order of these last words, and that we must first of all be delivered from eternal and utter death, before we can be invested with the eternal and absolute life.

Now, dear brethren, I dare say I have never spoken to the great majority of you before; it is quite possible I may never speak to any of you again. I have asked God to help me to speak so as that souls should be drawn to the Saviour. And I beseech you now, as my

last word, that you would listen, not to me, but to Him. For it is He that says to us, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His Son, that whosoever'—'whosoever,' a blank cheque, like the *M.* or *N.* of the Prayer-book, or the *A. B.* of a schedule; you can put your own name in it—'that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have'—here, now—'everlasting life.'

THE WEARIED CHRIST

'Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well. . . . He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.'—JOHN iv. 6, 32.

Two pictures result from these two verses, each striking in itself, and gaining additional emphasis by the contrast. It was during a long hot day's march that the tired band of pedestrians turned into the fertile valley. There, whilst the disciples went into the little hill-village to purchase, if they could, some food from the despised inhabitants, Jesus, apparently too exhausted to accompany them, 'sat *thus* on the well.' That little word *thus* seems to have a force difficult to reproduce in English. It is apparently intended to enhance the idea of utter weariness, either because the word 'wearied' is in thought to be supplied, 'sat, being thus wearied, on the well'; or because it conveys the notion which might be expressed by our 'just as He was'; as a tired man flings Himself down anywhere and anyhow, without any kind of preparation beforehand, and not much caring where it is that he rests.

Thus, utterly worn out, Jesus Christ sits on the well, whilst the western sun lengthens out the shadows on the plain. The disciples come back, and what a change

they find. Hunger gone, exhaustion ended, fresh vigour in their wearied Master. What had made the difference? The woman's repentance and joy. And He unveils the secret of His reinvigoration when He says, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of'—the hidden manna. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'

Now, I think if we take just three points of view, we shall gain the lessons of this remarkable contrast. Note, then, the wearied Christ; the devoted Christ; the reinvigorated Christ.

I. The wearied Christ.

How precious it is to us that this Gospel, which has the loftiest things to say about the manifest divinity of our Lord, and the glory that dwelt in Him, is always careful to emphasise also the manifest limitations and weaknesses of the Manhood. John never forgets either term of his great sentence in which all the gospel is condensed, 'the Word became flesh.' Ever he shows us 'the Word'; ever 'the flesh.' Thus it is he only who records the saying on the Cross, 'I thirst.' It is he who tells us how Jesus Christ, not merely for the sake of getting a convenient opening of a conversation, or to conciliate prejudices, but because He needed what He asked, said to the woman of Samaria, 'Give Me to drink.' So the weariness of the Master stands forth for us as pathetic proof that it was no shadowy investiture with an apparent Manhood to which He stooped, but a real participation in our limitations and weaknesses, so that work to Him was fatigue, even though in Him dwelt the manifest glory of that divine nature which 'fainteth not, neither is weary.'

Not only does this pathetic incident teach us for our firmer faith, and more sympathetic and closer appre-

hension, the reality of the Manhood of Jesus Christ, but it supplies likewise some imperfect measure of His love, and reveals to us one condition of His power. Ah! if He had not Himself known weariness He never could have said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It was because Himself 'took our infirmities,' and amongst these the weakness of tired muscles and exhausted frame, that 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.' The Creator must have no share in the infirmities of the creature. It must be His unwearied power that calls them all by their names; and because He is great in might 'not one' of the creatures of His hand can 'fail.' But the Redeemer must participate in that from which He redeems; and the condition of His strength being 'made perfect in our weakness' is that our weakness shall have cast a shadow upon the glory of His strength. The measure of His love is seen in that, long before Calvary, He entered into the humiliation and sufferings and sorrows of humanity; a condition of His power is seen in that, forasmuch as the 'children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same,' not only that 'through death He might deliver' from death, but that in life He might redeem from the ills and sorrows of life.

Nor does that exhausted Figure, reclining on Jacob's Well, preach to us only what *He* was. It proclaims to us likewise what *we* should be. For if His work was carried on to the edge of His capacity, and if He shrank not from service because it involved toil, what about the professing followers of Jesus Christ, who think that they are exempted from any form of service because they can plead that it will weary them? What

about those who say that they tread in His footsteps, and have never known what it was to yield up one comfort, one moment of leisure, one thrill of enjoyment, or to encounter one sacrifice, one act of self-denial, one aching of weariness for the sake of the Lord who bore all for them? The wearied Christ proclaims His manhood, proclaims His divinity and His love, and rebukes us who consent to 'walk in the way of His commandments' only on condition that it can be done without dust or heat; and who are ready to run the race that is set before us, only if we can come to the goal without perspiration or turning a hair. 'Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.'

II. Still further, notice here the devoted Christ.

It is not often that He lets us have a glimpse into the innermost chambers of His heart, in so far as the impelling motives of His course are concerned. But here He lays them bare. 'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.'

Now, it is no mere piece of grammatical pedantry when I ask you to notice that the language of the original is so constructed as to give prominence to the idea that the aim of Christ's life was the doing of the Father's will; and that it is the aim rather than the actual performance and realisation of the aim which is pointed at by our Lord. The words would be literally rendered 'My meat is *that I may do* the will of Him that sent Me and finish His work'—that is to say, the very nourishment and refreshment of Christ was found in making the accomplishment of the Father's commandment His ever-impelling motive, His ever-pursued goal. The expression carries us into the inmost heart of Jesus, dealing, as it does, with the one

all-pervading motive rather than with the resulting actions, fair and holy as these were.

Brethren, the secret of our lives, if they are at all to be worthy and noble, must be the same—the recognition, not only as they say now, that we have a mission, but that there *is* a Sender; which is a wholly different view of our position, and that He who sends is the loving Father, who has spoken to us in that dear Son, who Himself made it His aim thus to obey, in order that it might be possible for us to re-echo His voice, and to repeat His aim. The recognition of the Sender, the absolute submission of our wills to His, must run through all the life. You may do your daily work, whatever it be, with this for its motto, ‘the will of the Lord be done’; and they who thus can look at their trade, or profession, and see the trivialities and monotonies of their daily occupations, in the transfiguring light of that great thought, will never need to complain that life is small, ignoble, wearisome, insignificant. As with pebbles in some clear brook with the sunshine on it, the water in which they are sunk glorifies and magnifies them. If you lift them out, they are but bits of dull stone; lying beneath the sunlit ripples they are jewels. Plunge the prose of your life, and all its trivialities, into that great stream, and it will magnify and glorify the smallest and the homeliest. Absolute submission to the divine will, and the ever-present thrilling consciousness of doing it, were the secret of Christ’s life, and ought to be the secret of ours.

Note the distinction between doing the will and perfecting the work. That implies that Jesus Christ, like us, reached forward, in each successive act of obedience to the successive manifestations of the Father’s will, to something still undone. The work

will never be perfected or finished except on condition of continual fulfilment, moment by moment, of the separate behests of that divine will. For the Lord, as for His servants, this was the manner of obedience, that He 'pressed towards the mark,' and by individual acts of conformity secured that at last the whole 'work' should have been so completely accomplished that He might be able to say upon the Cross, 'It is finished.' If we have any right to call ourselves His, we too have thus to live.

III. Lastly, notice the reinvigorated Christ.

I have already pointed out the lovely contrast between the two pictures, the beginning and the end of this incident; so I need not dwell upon that. The disciples wondered when they found that Christ desired and needed none of the homely sustenance that they had brought to Him. And when He answered their sympathy rather than their curiosity—for they did not ask Him any questions, but they said to Him, 'Master, eat'—with 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of,' they, in their blind, blundering fashion, could only imagine that some one had brought Him something. So they gave occasion for the great words upon which we have been touching.

Notice, however, that Christ here sets forth the lofty aim at conformity to the divine will and fulfilment of the divine work as being the meat of the soul. It is the true food for us all. The spirit which feeds upon such food will grow and be nourished. And the soul which feeds upon its own will and fancies, and not upon the plain brown bread of obedience, which is wholesome, though it be often bitter, will feed upon ashes, which will grate upon the teeth and hurt the palate. Such a soul will be like those wretched

infants that are discovered sometimes at 'baby-farms,' starved and stunted, and not grown to half their right size. If you would have your spirits strong, robust, well nourished, live by obedience, and let the will of God be the food of your souls, and all will be well.

Souls thus fed can do without a good deal that others need. Why, enthusiasm for anything lifts a man above physical necessities and lower desires, even in its poorest forms. A regiment of soldiers making a forced march, or an athlete trying to break the record, will tramp, tramp on, not needing food, or rest, or sleep, until they have achieved their purpose, poor and ignoble though it may be. In all regions of life, enthusiasm and lofty aims make the soul lord of the body and of the world.

And in the Christian life we shall be thus lords, exactly in proportion to the depth and earnestness of our desires to do the will of God. They who thus are fed can afford 'to scorn delights and live laborious days.' They who thus are fed can afford to do with plain living, if there be high impulses as well as high thinking. And sure I am that nothing is more certain to stamp out the enthusiasm of obedience which ought to mark the Christian life than the luxurious fashion of living which is getting so common to-day amongst professing Christians.

It is not in vain that we read the old story about the Jewish boys whose faces were radiant and whose flesh was firmer when they were fed on pulse and water than on all the wine and dainties of the Babylonish court. 'Set a knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite,' and let us remember that the less we use, and the less we feel that we need, of outward

goods, the nearer do we approach to the condition in which holy desires and lofty aims will visit our spirits.

I commend to you, brethren, the story of our text, in its most literal application, as well as in the loftier spiritual lessons that may be drawn from it. To be near Christ, and to desire to live for Him, delivers us from dependence upon earthly things; and in those who thus do live the old word shall be fulfilled, ‘Better is a little that a righteous man hath, than the abundance of many wicked.’

‘GIVE ME TO DRINK’

‘. . . Jesus saith unto her, Give Me to drink. . . . Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He.’—JOHN iv. 7, 26.

THIS Evangelist very significantly sets side by side our Lord’s conversations with Nicodemus and with the woman of Samaria. The persons are very different: the one a learned Rabbi of reputation, influence, and large theological knowledge of the then fashionable kind; the other an alien woman, poor—for she had to do this menial task of water-drawing in the heat of the day—and of questionable character.

The diversity of persons necessitates great differences in the form of our Lord’s address to each; but the resemblances are as striking as the divergencies. In both we have His method of gradually unveiling the truth to a susceptible soul, beginning with symbol and a hint, gradually enlarging the hint and translating the symbol; and finally unveiling Himself as the Giver and the Gift. There is another resemblance; in both the characteristic gift is that of the Spirit of Life, and, perhaps, in both the symbol is the same.

For we read in one of 'water and the Spirit'; and in the other of the fountain within, springing into everlasting life. However that may be, the process of teaching is all but identical in substance in both cases, though in form so various.

The words of our Lord which I have taken for our text now are His first and last utterance in this conversation. What a gulf lies between! They are linked together by the intervening sayings, and constitute with these a great ladder, of which the foot is fast on earth, and the top fixed in heaven. On the one hand, He owns the lowest necessities; on the other, He makes the highest claims. Let us ponder on this remarkable juxtaposition, and try to gather the lessons that are plain in it.

I. First, then, I think we see here the mystery of the dependent Christ.

'Give Me to drink': 'I am He.' Try to see the thing for a moment with the woman's eyes. She comes down from her little village, up amongst the cliffs on the hillside, across the narrow, hot valley, beneath the sweltering sunshine reflected from the bounding mountains, and she finds, in the midst of the lush vegetation round the ancient well, a solitary, weary Jew, travel-worn, evidently exhausted—for His disciples had gone away to buy food, and He was too wearied to go with them—looking into the well, but having no dipper or vessel by which to get any of its cool treasure. We lose a great deal of the meaning of Christ's request if we suppose that it was merely a way of getting into conversation with the woman, a 'breaking of the ice.' It was a great deal more than that. It was the utterance of a felt and painful necessity, which He Himself could not supply without

a breach of what He conceived to be His filial dependence. He could have brought water out of the well. He did not need to depend upon the pitcher that the disciples had perhaps unthinkingly carried away with them when they went to buy bread. He did not need to ask the woman to give, but He chose to do so. We lose much if we do not see in this incident far more than the woman saw, but we lose still more if we do not see what she did see. And the words which the Master spoke to her are no mere way of introducing a conversation on religious themes; but He asked for a draught which He needed, and which He had no other way of getting.

So, then, here stands, pathetically set forth before us, our Lord's true participation in two of the distinguishing characteristics of our weak humanity—subjection to physical necessities and dependence on kindly help. We find Him weary, hungry, thirsty, sometimes slumbering. And all these instances are documents and proofs for us that He was a true man like ourselves, and that, like ourselves, He depended on ‘the woman that ministered to Him’ for the supply of His necessities, and so knew the limitations of our social and else helpless humanity.

But then a wearied and thirsty man is nothing of much importance. But here is a Man who *humbled Himself* to be weary and to thirst. The keynote of this Gospel, the one thought which unlocks all its treasures, and to the elucidation of which, in all its aspects, the whole book is devoted, is, ‘The Word was made flesh.’ Only when you let in the light of the last utterance of our text, ‘I that speak unto thee am He,’ do we understand the pathos, the sublimity, the depth and blessedness of meaning which lie in

the first one, 'Give Me to drink.' When we see that He bowed Himself, and willingly stretched out His hands for the fetters, we come to understand the significance of these traces of His manhood. The woman says, with wonder, 'How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me?' and that was wonderful. But, as He hints to her, if she had known more clearly who this Person was, that seemed to be a Jew, a deeper wonder would have crept over her spirit. The wonder is that the Eternal Word should need the water of the well, and should ask it of a poor human creature.

And why this humiliation? He could, as I have said, have wrought a miracle. He that fed five thousand, He that had turned water into wine at the rustic marriage-feast, would have had no difficulty in quenching His thirst if he had chosen to use His miraculous power therefor. But He here shows us that the true filial spirit will rather die than cast off its dependence on the Father, and the same motive which led Him to reject the temptation in the wilderness, and to answer with sublime confidence, 'Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word from the mouth of God,' forbids Him here to use other means of securing the draught that He so needed than the appeal to the sympathy of an alien, and the swift compassion of a woman's heart.

And then, let us remember that the motive of this willing acceptance of the limitations and weaknesses of humanity is, in the deepest analysis, simply His love to us; as the mediæval hymn has it, 'Seeking me, Thou satest weary.'

In that lonely Traveller, worn, exhausted, thirsty, craving for a draught of water from a stranger's hand,

is set forth ‘the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth.’ A strange manifestation of divine glory this! But if we understand that the glory of God is the lustrous light of His self-revealing love, perhaps we shall understand how, from that faint, craving voice, ‘Give Me to drink,’ that glory sounds forth more than in the thunders that rolled about the rocky peak of Sinai. Strange to think, brethren, that the voice from those lips dry with thirst, which was low and weak, was the voice that spoke to the sea, ‘Peace! be still,’ and there was a calm; that said to demons, ‘Come out of him!’ and they evacuated their fortress; that cast its command into the grave of Lazarus, and he came forth; and which one day all that are in the grave shall hear, and hearing shall obey. ‘Give Me to drink.’ ‘I that speak unto thee am He.’

II. Secondly, we may note here the self-revealing Christ.

The process by which Jesus gradually unveils His full character to this woman, so unspiritual and unsusceptible as she appeared at first sight to be, is interesting and instructive. It would occupy too much of your time for me to do more than set it before you in the barest outline. Noting the singular divergence between the two sayings which I have taken as our text, it is interesting to notice how the one gradually merges into the other. First of all, Jesus Christ, as it were, opens a finger of His hand to let the woman have a glimpse of the gift lying there, that that may kindle desire, and hints at some occult depth in His person and nature all undreamed of by her yet, and which would be the occasion of greater wonder, and of a reversal of their parts, if she knew it. Then, in answer to her, half understanding that He meant

more than met the ear, and yet opposing the plain physical difficulties that were in the way, in that He had 'nothing to draw with, and the well is deep,' and asking whether He were greater than our father Jacob, who also had given, and given not only a draught, but the well, our Lord enlarges her vision of the blessedness of the gift, though He says but little more of its nature, except in so far as that may be gathered from the fact that the water that He will give will be a permanent source of satisfaction, forbidding the pangs of unquenched desire ever again to be felt as pangs; and from the other fact that it will be an inward possession, leaping up with a fountain's energy, and a life within itself, towards, and into everlasting life. Next, he strongly assails conscience and demands repentance, and reveals Himself as the reader of the secrets of the heart. Then He discloses the great truths of spiritual worship. And, finally, as a prince in disguise might do, He flings aside the mantle of which He had let a fold or two be blown back in the previous conversation, and stands confessed. 'I that speak unto thee am He.' That is to say, the kindling of desire, the proffer of the all-satisfying gift, the quickening of conscience, the revelation of a Father to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and the final full disclosure of His person and office as the Giver of the gift which shall slake all the thirsts of men—these are the stages of His self-revelation.

Then note, not only the process, but the substance of the revelation of Himself. The woman had a far more spiritual and lofty conception of the office of Messiah than the Jews had. It is not the first time that heretics have reached a loftier ideal of some parts of the truth than the orthodox attain. To the Jew

the Messiah was a conquering king, who would help them to ride on the necks of their enemies, and pay back their persecutions and oppressions. To this Samaritan woman—speaking, I suppose, the conceptions of her race—the Messiah was One who was to ‘*tell us all things.*’

Jesus Christ accepts the position, endorses her anticipations, and in effect presents Himself before her and before us as the Fountain of all certitude and knowledge in regard to spiritual matters. For all that we can know, or need to know, with regard to God and man and their mutual relations; for all that we can or need know in regard to manhood, its ideal, its obligations, its possibilities, its destinies; for all that we need to know of men in their relation to one another, we have to turn to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who ‘will tell us all things.’ He is the Fountain of light; He is the Foundation of certitude; and they who seek, not hypotheses and possibilities and conjectures and dreams, but the solid substance of a reliable knowledge, must grasp Him, and esteem the words of His mouth and the deeds of His life more than their necessary food.

He meets this woman’s conceptions as He had met those of Nicodemus. To him He had unveiled Himself as the Son of God, and the Son of Man who came down from heaven, and is in heaven, and ascends to heaven. To the woman He reveals Himself as the Messiah, who will tell us all truth, and to both as the Giver of the gift which shall communicate and sustain and refresh the better life. But I cannot help dwelling for a moment upon the remarkable, beautiful, and significant designation which our Lord employs here. ‘I that speak unto thee.’ The word in the original, trans-

lated by our version 'speak,' is even more sweet, because more familiar, and conveys the idea of unrestrained frank intercourse. Perhaps we might render 'I who am talking with Thee!' and that our Lord desired to emphasise to the woman's heart the notion of His familiar intercourse with her, Messiah though He were, seems to me confirmed by the fact that He uses the same expression, with additional grace and tenderness about it, when He says, with such depth of meaning, to the blind man whom He had healed, 'Thou hast both seen Him,' with the eyes to which He gave sight and object of sight, 'and it is He that *talketh* with thee.' The familiar Christ who will come and speak to us face to face and heart to heart, 'as a man speaketh with his friend,' is the Christ who will tell us all things, and whom we may wholly trust.

Note too how this revelation has for its condition the docile acceptance of the earlier and imperfect teachings. If the woman had not yielded herself to our Lord's earlier words, and, though with very dim insight, yet with a heart that sought to be taught, followed Him as He stepped from round to round of the ascending ladder, she had never stood on the top and seen this great vision. If you see nothing more in Jesus Christ than a man like yourself, compassed with our infirmities, and yet sweet and gracious and good and pure, be true to what you know, and put it into practice, and be ready to accept all the light that dawns. They that begin down at the bottom with hearing 'Give me to drink,' may stand at the top, and hear Him speak to them His unveiled truth and His full glory. 'To him that hath shall be given.' 'If any man wills to do His will he shall know of the teaching.'

III. Lastly, we have here the universal Christ.

The woman wondered that, being a Jew, He spoke to her. As I have said, our Lord's first utterance is simply the expression of a real physical necessity. But it is none the less what the woman felt it to be, a strange overleaping of barriers that towered very high. A Samaritan, a woman, a sinner, is the recipient of the first clear confession from Jesus Christ of His Messiahship and dignity. She was right in her instinct that something lay behind His sweeping aside of the barriers and coming so close to her with His request. These two, the prejudices of race and the contempt for woman, two of the crying evils of the old world, were overpassed by our Lord as if He never saw them. They were too high for men's puny limbs; they made no obstacle to the march of His divine compassion. And therein lies a symbol, if you like, but none the less a prophecy that will be fulfilled, of the universal adaptation and destination of the Gospel, and its independence of all distinctions of race and sex, condition, moral character. In Jesus Christ 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, neither bond nor free'; ye 'are all one in Christ.' If He had been but a Jew, it was wonderful that He should talk to a Samaritan. But there is nothing in the character and life of Christ, as recorded in Scripture, more remarkable and more plain than the entire absence of any racial peculiarities, or of characteristics owing to His position in space or time. So unlike His nation was He that the very *élite* of His nation snarled at Him and said, 'Thou art a Samaritan!' So unlike them was He that one feels that a character so palpitantly human to its core, and so impossible to explain from its surroundings, is inexplicable, but on the New

Testament theory that He is not a Jew, or man only, but the Son of Man, the divine embodiment of the ideal of humanity, whose dwelling was on earth, but His origin and home in the bosom of God. Therefore Jesus Christ is the world's Christ, your Christ, my Christ, every man's Christ, the Tree of Life that stands in the midst of the garden, that all men may draw near to it and gather of its fruit.

Brother, answer His proffer of the gift as this woman did: 'Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not; neither go all the way to the world's broken cisterns to draw'; and He will put into your hearts that indwelling fountain of life, so that you may say like this woman's townspeople: 'Now I have heard Him myself, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE GIFT AND THE GIVER

'Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.'—JOHN iv. 10.

THIS Gospel has two characteristics seldom found together: deep thought and vivid character-drawing. Nothing can be more clear-cut and dramatic than the scene in the chapter before us. There is not a word of description of this Samaritan woman. She paints herself, and it is not a beautiful picture. She is apparently of the peasant class, from a little village nestling on the hill above the plain, come down in the broiling sunshine to Jacob's well. She is of mature age, and has had a not altogether reputable past. She is frivolous, ready to talk with strangers, with a tongue quick to turn grave things into jests; and yet she

possesses, hidden beneath masses of unclean vanities, a conscience and a yearning for something better than she has, which Christ's words awoke, and which was finally so enkindled as to make her fit to receive the full declaration of His Messiahship, which Pharisees and priests could not be trusted with.

I need scarcely do more than remind you of the way in which the conversation between this strangely assorted pair began. The solitary Jew, sitting spent with travel on the well, asks for a draught of water; not in order to get an opening for preaching, but because He needs it. She replies with an exclamation of light wonder, half a jest and half a sarcasm, and challenging a response in the same tone.

But Christ lifts her to a higher level by the words of my text, which awed levity, and prepared for a fuller revelation. 'Thou dost wonder that I, being a Jew, ask drink of thee, a Samaritan. If thou knewest who I am, thy wonder at My asking would be more. If thou knewest what I have to give, we should change places, and thou wouldest ask, and I should bestow.'

So then, we have here gift, Giver, way of getting, and ignorance that hinders asking. Let us look at these.

I. First, the gift of God. Now it is quite clear that our Lord means the same thing, whatever it may be, by the two expressions, the 'gift of God' and the 'living water.' For, unless He does, the whole sequence of my text falls to pieces. 'Living water' was suggested, no doubt, by the circumstances of the moment. There, in the well, was an ever-springing source, and, says He, a like supply, ever welling up for thirsty lips and foul hands, ever sweet and ever sufficient, God is ready to give.

We may remember how, all through Scripture, we hear the tinkle of these waters as they run. The force of the expression is to be gathered largely from the Old Testament and the uses of the metaphor there. It has been supposed that by the 'living water' which God gives is here meant some one specific gift, such as that of the Holy Spirit, which sometimes is expressed by the metaphor. Rather I should be disposed to say the 'living water' is eternal life. 'With Thee is the fountain of life.' And so, in the last resort, the gift of God is God Himself. Nothing else will suffice for us, brethren. We need Him, and we need none but Him.

Our Lord, in the subsequent part of this conversation, again touches upon this great metaphor, and suggests one or two characteristics, blessings, and excellences of it. 'It shall be *in* him,' it is something that we may carry about with us in our hearts, inseparable from our being, free from all possibility of being filched away by violence, being rent from us by sorrows, or even being parted from us by death. What a man has outside of him he only seems to have. Our only real possessions are those which have passed into the substance of our souls. All else we shall leave behind. The only good is inward good; and this water of life slakes our thirst because it flows into the deepest place of our being, and abides there for ever.

Oh! you that are seeking your satisfaction from fountains that remain outside of you after all your efforts, learn that all of them, by reason of their externality, will sooner or later be 'broken cisterns that can hold no water.' And I beseech you, if you want rest for your souls and stilling for their yearnings, look for it there, where only it can be found, in Him, who not only dwells in the heavens to rule

and to shower down blessings, but enters into the waiting heart and abides there, the inward, and therefore the only real, possession and riches. 'It shall be *in* him a fountain of water.'

It is 'springing up'—with an immortal energy, with ever fresh fulness, by its own inherent power, needing no pumps nor machinery, but ever welling forth its refreshment, an emblem of the joyous energy and continual freshness of vitality, which is granted to those who carry God in their hearts, and therefore can never be depressed beyond measure, nor ever feel that the burden of life is too heavy to bear, or its sorrows too sharp to endure.

It springs up 'into eternal life,' for water must seek its source, and rise to the level of its origin, and this fountain within a man, that reaches up ever towards the eternal life from which it came, and which it gives to its possessor, will bear him up, as some strong spring will lift the clods that choked its mouth, will bear him up towards the eternal life which is native to it, and therefore native to him.

Brethren, no man is so poor, so low, so narrow in capacity, so limited in heart and head, but that he needs a whole God to make him restful. Nothing else will. To seek for satisfaction elsewhere is like sailors who in their desperation, when the water-tanks are empty, slake their thirst with the treacherous blue that washes cruelly along the battered sides of their ship. A moment's alleviation is followed by the recurrence, in tenfold intensity, of the pangs of thirst, and by madness, and death. Do not drink the salt water that flashes and rolls by your side when you can have recourse to the fountain of life that is with God.

'Oh!' you say, 'commonplace, threadbare pulpit

rhetoric.' Yes! Do you live as if it were true? It will never be too threadbare to be dinned into your ears until it has passed into your lives and regulated them.

II. Now, in the next place, notice the Giver.

Jesus Christ blends in one sentence, startling in its boldness, the gift of God, and Himself as the Bestower. This Man, exhausted for want of a draught of water, speaks with parched lips a claim most singularly in contrast with the request which He had just made: 'I will give thee the living water.' No wonder that the woman was bewildered, and could only say, 'The well is deep, and Thou hast nothing to draw with.' She might have said, 'Why then dost Thou ask me?' The words were meant to create astonishment, in order that the astonishment might awaken interest, which would lead to the capacity for further illumination. Suppose you had been there, had seen the Man whom she saw, had heard the two things that she heard, and knew no more about Him than she knew, what would *you* have thought of Him and His words? Perhaps you would have been more contemptuous than she was. See to it that, since you know so much that explains and warrants them, you do not treat them worse than she did.

Jesus Christ claims to give God's gifts. He is able to give to that poor, frivolous, impure-hearted and impure-lived woman, at her request, the eternal life which shall still all the thirst of her soul, that had often in the past been satiated and disgusted, but had never been satisfied by any of its draughts.

And He claims that in this giving He is something more than a channel, because, says He, 'If thou hadst asked of Me I would give thee.' We sometimes think

of the relation between God and Christ as being typified by that of some land-locked sea amidst remote mountains, and the affluent that brings its sparkling treasures to the thirsting valley. But Jesus Christ is no mere vehicle for the conveyance of a divine gift, but His own heart, His own power, His own love are in it; and it is His gift just as much as it is God's.

Now I do not do more than pause for one moment to ask you to think of what inference is necessarily involved in such a claim as this. If we know anything about Jesus Christ at all, we know that He spoke in this tone, not occasionally, but habitually. It will not do to pick out other bits of His character or actions and admire these and ignore *the* characteristic of His teachings—His claims for Himself. And I have only this one word to say, if Jesus Christ ever said anything the least like the words of my text, and if they were not true, what was He but a fanatic who had lost His head in the fancy of His inspiration? And if He said these words and they *were* true, what is He then? What but that which this Gospel insists from its beginning to its end that He was—the Eternal Word of God, by whom all divine revelation from the beginning has been made, and who at last ‘became flesh’ that we might ‘receive of His fulness,’ and therein ‘be filled with all the fulness of God.’ Other alternative I, for my part, see none.

But I would have you notice, too, the connection between these human needs of the Saviour and His power to give the divine gift. Why did He not simply say to this woman, ‘If thou knewest who I am?’ Why did He use this periphrasis of my text, ‘Who it is that saith unto thee, “Give Me to drink”’? Why but because He wanted to fix her attention on the startling

contradiction between His appearance and His claims —on the one hand asserting divine prerogative, on the other forcing into prominence human weakness and necessity, because these two things, the human weakness and the divine prerogative, are inseparably braided together and intertwined. Some of you will remember the great scene in Shakespeare where the weakness of Cæsar is urged as a reason for rejecting his imperial authority:—

‘Ay! and that tongue of his, that bade the Romans
Mark him, and write his speeches in their books,
Alas! it cried, “Give me some drink, . . .
Like a sick girl.”’

And the inference that is drawn is, how can he be fit to be a ruler of men? But we listen to our Cæsar and Emperor, when He asks this woman for water, and when He says on the Cross, ‘I thirst,’ and we feel that these are not the least of His titles to be crowned with many crowns. They bring Him nearer to us, and they are the means by which His love reaches its end, of bestowing upon us all, if we will have it, the cup of salvation. Unless He had said the one of these two things, He never could have said the other. Unless the dry lips had petitioned, ‘Give Me to drink,’ the gracious lips could never have said, ‘I will give thee living water.’ Unless, like Jacob of old, this Shepherd could say, ‘In the day the drought consumed Me,’ it would have been impossible that the flock ‘shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, . . . for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them to living fountains of water.’

III. Again, notice how to get the gift.

Christ puts together, as if they were all but contem-

poraneous, 'thou wouldst have asked of Me,' and 'I would have given thee.' The hand on the telegraph transmits the message, and back, swift as the lightning, flashes the response. The condition, the only condition, and the indispensable condition, of possessing that water of life—the summary expression for all the gifts of God in Jesus Christ, which at the last are essentially God Himself—is the desire to possess it turned to Jesus Christ. Is it not strange that men should not desire; is it not strange and sad that such foolish creatures are we that we do not want what we need; that our wishes and needs are often diametrically opposite? All men desire happiness, but some of us have so vitiated our tastes and our palates by fiery intoxicants that the water of life seems dreadfully tasteless and unstimulating, and so we will rather go back again to the delusive, poisoned drinks than glue our lips to the river of God's pleasures.

But it is not enough that there should be the desire. It must be turned to Him. In fact the asking of my text, so far as you and I are concerned, is but another way of speaking the great keyword of personal religion, faith in Jesus Christ. For they who ask, know their necessity, are convinced of the power of Him to whom they appeal to grant their requests, and rely upon His love to do so. And these three things, the sense of need, the conviction of Christ's ability to save and to satisfy, and of His infinite love that desires to make us blessed—these three things fused together make the faith which receives the gift of God.

Remember, brethren, that another of the scriptural expressions for the act of trusting in Him, is *taking*, not asking. You do not need to ask, as if for something that is not provided. What we all need to do is

to open our eyes to see what is there, if we like to put out our hands and take it. Why should we be saying, 'Give me to drink,' when a pierced hand reaches out to us the cup of salvation, and says, 'Drink ye all of it'? 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come . . . and drink . . . without money and without price.'

There is no other condition but desire turned to Christ, and that is the necessary condition. God cannot give men salvation, as veterinary surgeons drench unwilling horses—forcing the medicine down their throats through clenched teeth. There must be the opened mouth, and wherever there is, there will be the full supply. 'Ask, and ye shall receive'; take, and ye shall possess.

IV. Lastly, mark the ignorance that prevents asking.

Jesus Christ looked at this poor woman and discerned in her, though, as I said, it was hidden beneath mountains of folly and sin, a thirsty soul that was dimly longing for something better. And He believed that, if once the mystery of His being and the mercy of God's gifts were displayed before her, she would melt into a yearning of desire that is certain to be fulfilled. In some measure the same thing is true of us all. For surely, surely, if only you saw realities, and things as they are, some of you would not be content to continue as you are—without this water of life. Blind, blind, blind, are the men who grope at noon-day as in the dark and turn away from Jesus. If you knew, not with the head only, but with the whole nature, if you knew the thirst of your soul, the sweetness of the water, the readiness of the Giver, and the dry and parched land to which you condemn yourselves by your refusal, surely you would bethink yourself and fall at His feet and ask, and get, the water of life.

But, brethren, there is a worse case than ignorance; there is the case of people that know and refuse, not by reason of imperfect knowledge, but by reason of averted will. And I beseech you to ponder whether that may not be your condition. ‘Whosoever *will*, let him come.’ ‘Ye *will* not come unto Me that ye might have life.’ I do not think I venture much when I say that I am sure there are people hearing me now, not Christians, who are as certain, deep down in their hearts, that the only rest of the soul is in God, and the only way to get it is through Christ, as any saint of God’s ever was. But the knowledge does not touch their will because they like the poison and they do not want the life.

Oh! dear friends, the instantaneousness of Christ’s answer, and the certainty of it, are as true for each of us as they were for this woman. The offer is made to us all, just as it was to her. We can gather round that Rock like the Israelites in the wilderness, and slake every thirst of our souls from its outgushing streams. Jesus Christ says to each of us, as He did to her, tenderly, warningly, invitingly, and yet rebukingly, ‘If thou knewest . . . thou wouldst ask, . . . and I would give.’

Take care lest, by continual neglect, you force Him at last to change His words, and to lament over you, as He did over the city that He loved so well, and yet destroyed. ‘If thou *hadst* known in thy day the things that belong to thy peace. But now they are hid from thine eyes.’

THE SPRINGING FOUNTAIN

'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.'—JOHN iv. 14.

THERE are two kinds of wells, one a simple reservoir, another containing the waters of a spring. It is the latter kind which is spoken about here, as is clear not only from the meaning of the word in the Greek, but also from the description of it as 'springing up.' That suggests at once the activity of a fountain. A fountain is the emblem of motion, not of rest. Its motion is derived from itself, not imparted to it from without. Its 'silvery column' rises ever heavenward, though gravitation is too strong for it, and drags it back again.

So Christ promises to this ignorant, sinful Samaritan woman that if she chose He would plant in her soul a gift which would thus well up, by its own inherent energy, and fill her spirit with music, and refreshment, and satisfaction.

What is that gift? The answer may be put in various ways which really all come to one. It is Himself, the unspeakable Gift, His own greatest gift; or it is the Spirit 'which they that believe on Him should receive,' and whereby He comes and dwells in men's hearts; or it is the resulting life, kindred with the life bestowed, a consequence of the indwelling Christ and the present Spirit.

And so the promise is that they who believe in Him and rest upon His love shall receive into their spirits a new life principle which shall rise in their hearts like a fountain, 'springing up into everlasting life.'

I think we shall best get the whole depth and magnitude of this great promise if, throwing aside all mere artificial order, we simply take the words as they stand

here in the text, and think, first, of Christ's gift as a fountain within; then as a fountain springing, leaping up, by its own power; and then as a fountain 'springing into everlasting life.'

I. First, Christ's gift is represented here as a fountain within.

Most men draw their supplies from without; they are rich, happy, strong, only when externals minister to them strength, happiness, riches. For the most of us, what we have is that which determines our felicity.

Take the lowest type of life, for instance, the men of whom the majority, alas! I suppose, in every time is composed, who live altogether on the low plane of the world, and for the world alone, whether their worldliness take the form of sensuous appetite, or of desire to acquire wealth and outward possessions. The thirst of the body is the type of the experience of all such people. It is satisfied and slaked for a moment, and then back comes the tyrannous appetite again. And, alas! the things that you drink to satisfy the thirst of your souls are too often like a publican's adulterated beer, which has got salt in it, and chemicals, and all sorts of things to stir up, instead of slaking and quenching, the thirst. So 'he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase.' The appetite grows by what it feeds on, and a little lust yielded to to-day is a bigger one to-morrow, and half a glass to-day grows to a bottle in a twelvemonth. As the old classical saying has it, he 'who begins by carrying a calf, before long is able to carry an ox'; so the thirst in the soul needs and drinks down a constantly increasing draught.

And even if we rise up into a higher region and look at the experience of the men who have in some

measure learned that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth,' nor in the abundance of the gratification that his animal nature gets, but that there must be an inward spring of satisfaction, if there is to be any satisfaction at all; if we take men who live for thought, and truth, and mental culture, and yield themselves up to the enthusiasm for some great cause, and are proud of saying, 'My mind to me a kingdom is,' though they present a far higher style of life than the former, yet even that higher type of man has so many of his roots in the external world that he is at the mercy of chances and changes, and he, too, has deep in his heart a thirst that nothing, no truth, no wisdom, no culture, nothing that addresses itself to one part of his nature, though it be the noblest and the loftiest, can ever satisfy and slake.

I am sure I have some such people in my audience, and to them this message comes. You may have, if you will, in your own hearts, a springing fountain of delight and of blessedness which will secure that no unsatisfied desires shall ever torment you. Christ in His fulness, His Spirit, the life that flows from both and is planted within our hearts, these are offered to us all; and if we have them we carry inclosed within ourselves all that is essential to our felicity; and we can say, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be self-satisfying,' not with the proud, stoical independence of a man who does not want either God or man to make him blessed, but with the humble independence of a man who can say 'my sufficiency is of God.'

No independence of externals is possible, nor wholesome if it were possible, except that which comes from absolute dependence on Jesus Christ.

If you have Christ in your heart then life is possible, peace is possible, joy is possible, under all circumstances and in all places. Everything which the soul can desire, it possesses. You will be like the garrison of a beleaguered castle, in the courtyard of which is a sparkling spring, fed from some source high up in the mountains, and finding its way in there by underground channels which no besiegers can ever touch. Sorrows will come, and make you sad, but though there may be much darkness round about you, there will be light in the darkness. The trees may be bare and leafless, but the sap has gone down to the roots. The world may be all wintry and white with snow, but there will be a bright little fire burning on your own hearthstone. You will carry within yourselves all the essentials to blessedness. If you have 'Christ in the vessel' you can smile at the storm. They that drink from earth's fountains 'shall thirst again'; but they who have Christ in their hearts will have a fountain within which will not freeze in the bitterest cold, nor fail in the fiercest heat. 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a fountain.'

II. Christ's gift is a springing fountain.

The emblem, of course, suggests motion by its own inherent impulse. Water may be stagnant, or it may yield to the force of gravity and slide down a descending river-bed, or it may be pumped up and lifted by external force applied to it, or it may roll as it does in the sea, drawn by the moon, driven by the winds, borne along by currents that owe their origin to outward heat or cold. But a fountain rises by an energy implanted within itself, and is the very emblem of joyous, free, self-dependent and self-regulated activity.

And so, says Christ, 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a springing fountain'; it shall not lie there stagnant, but leap like a living thing, up into the sunshine, and flash there, turned into diamonds, when the bright rays smile upon it.

So here is the promise of two things: the promise of activity, and of an activity which is its own law.

The promise of activity. There seems small blessing, in this overworked world, in a promise of more active exertion; but what an immense part of our nature lies dormant and torpid if we are not Christians! How much of the work that is done is dreary, wearisome, collar-work, against the grain. Do not the wheels of life often go slowly? Are you not often weary of the inexpressible monotony and fatigue? And do you not go to your work sometimes, though with a fierce feeling of 'need-to-do-it,' yet also with inward repugnance? And are there not great parts of your nature that have never woke into activity at all, and are ill at ease, because there is no field of action provided for them? The mind is like millstones; if you do not put the wheat into them to grind, they will grind each other's faces. So some of us are fretting ourselves to pieces, or are sick of a vague disease, and are morbid and miserable because the highest and noblest parts of our nature have never been brought into exercise. Surely this promise of Christ's should come as a true Gospel to such, offering, as it does, if we will trust ourselves to Him, a springing fountain of activity in our hearts that shall fill our whole being with joyous energy, and make it a delight to live and to work. It will bring to us new powers, new motives; it will set all the wheels of life going at double speed. We shall be quickened by the presence of that mighty power, even as a dim

taper is brightened and flames up when plunged into a jar of oxygen. And life will be delightful in its hardest toil, when it is toil for the sake of, and by the indwelling strength of, that great Lord and Master of our work.

And there is not only a promise of activity here, but of activity which is its own law and impulse. That is a blessed promise in two ways. In the first place, law will be changed into delight. We shall not be driven by a commandment standing over us with whip and lash, or coming behind us with spur and goad, but that which we ought to do we shall rejoice to do; and inclination and duty will coincide in all our lives when our life is Christ's life in us.

That should be a blessing to some of you who have been fighting against evil and trying to do right with more or less success, more or less interruptedly and at intervals, and have felt the effort to be a burden and a wearisomeness. Here is a promise of emancipation from all that constraint and yoke of bondage which duty discerned and unloved ever lays upon a man's shoulders. When we carry within us the gift of a life drawn from Jesus Christ, and are able to say like Him, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will, and Thy law is within my heart,' only then shall we have peace and joy in our lives. 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.'

And then, in the second place, that same thought of an activity which is its own impulse and its own law, suggests another aspect of this blessedness, namely, that it sets us free from the tyranny of external circumstances which absolutely shape the lives of so many of us. The lives of all must be to a large extent moulded by these, but they need not, and should not,

be completely determined by them. It is a miserable thing to see men and women driven before the wind like thistledown. Circumstances must influence us, but they may either influence us to base compliance and passive reception of their stamp, or to brave resistance and sturdy nonconformity to their solicitations. So used, they will influence us to a firmer possession of the good which is most opposite to them, and we shall be the more unlike our surroundings, the more they abound in evil. You can make your choice whether, if I may so say, you shall be like balloons that are at the mercy of the gale and can only shape their course according as it comes upon them and blows them along, or like steamers that have an inward power that enables them to keep their course from whatever point the wind blows, or like some sharply built sailing-ship that, with a strong hand at the helm, and canvas rightly set, can sail almost in the teeth of the wind and compel it to bear her along in all but the opposite direction to that in which it would carry her if she lay like a log on the water.

I beseech you all, and especially you young people, not to let the world take and shape you, like a bit of soft clay put into a brick-mould, but to lay a masterful hand upon it, and compel it to help you, by God's grace, to be nobler, and truer, and purer.

It is a shame for men to live the lives that so many amongst us live, as completely at the mercy of externals to determine the direction of their lives as the long weeds in a stream that yield to the flow of the current. It is of no use to preach high and brave maxims, telling men to assert their lordship over externals, unless we can tell them how to find the inward power that will enable them to do so. But we

can preach such noble exhortations to some purpose when we can point to the great gift which Christ is ready to give, and exhort them to open their hearts to receive that indwelling power which shall make them free from the dominion of these tyrant circumstances and emancipate them into the 'liberty of the sons of God.' 'The water that I shall give him shall be in him a leaping fountain.'

III. The last point here is that Christ's gift is a fountain 'springing up into everlasting life.'

The water of a fountain rises by its own impulse, but howsoever its silver column may climb it always falls back into its marble basin. But this fountain rises higher, and at each successive jet higher, tending towards, and finally touching, its goal, which is at the same time its course. The water seeks its own level, and the fountain climbs until it reaches Him from whom it comes, and the eternal life in which He lives. We might put that thought in two ways. First, the gift is eternal in its duration. The water with which the world quenches its thirst perishes. All supplies and resources dry up like winter torrents in summer heat. All created good is but for a time. As for some, it perishes in the use; as for other, it evaporates and passes away, or is 'as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up'; as for all, we have to leave it behind when we go hence. But this gift springs into everlasting life, and when we go it goes with us. The Christian character is identical in both worlds, and however the forms and details of pursuits may vary, the essential principle remains one. So that the life of a Christian man on earth and his life in heaven are but one stream, as it were, which may, indeed, like some of those American rivers, run for a

time through a deep, dark cañon, or in an underground passage, but comes out at the further end into broader, brighter plains and summer lands; where it flows with a quieter current and with the sunshine reflected on its untroubled surface, into the calm ocean. He has one gift and one life for earth and heaven—Christ and His Spirit, and the life that is consequent upon both.

And then the other side of this great thought is that the gift tends to, is directed towards, or aims at and reaches, everlasting life. The whole of the Christian experience on earth is a prophecy and an anticipation of heaven. The whole of the Christian experience of earth evidently aims towards that as its goal, and is interpreted by that as its end. What a contrast that is to the low and transient aims which so many of us have! The lives of many men go creeping along the surface when they might spring heavenwards. My friend! which is it to be with you? Is your life to be like one of those Northern Asiatic rivers that loses itself in the sands, or that flows into, or is sluggishly lost in, a bog; or is it going to tumble over a great precipice, and fall sounding away down into the blackness; or is it going to leap up 'into everlasting life'? Which of the two aims is the wiser, is the nobler, is the better?

And a life that thus springs will reach what it springs towards. A fountain rises and falls, for the law of gravity takes it down; this fountain rises and reaches, for the law of pressure takes it up, and the water rises to the level of its source. Christ's gift mocks no man, it sets in motion no hopes that it does not fulfil; it stimulates to no work that it does not crown with success. If you desire a life that reaches its goal, a life

in which all your desires are satisfied, a life that is full of joyous energy, that of a free man emancipated from circumstances and from the tyranny of unwelcome law, and victorious over externals, open your hearts to the gift that Christ offers you; the gift of Himself, of His death and passion, of His sacrifice and atonement, of His indwelling and sanctifying Spirit.

He offered all the fulness of that grace to this Samaritan woman, in her ignorance, in her profligacy, in her flippancy. He offers it to you. His offer awoke an echo in her heart, will it kindle any response in yours? Oh! when He says to you, 'The water that I shall give will be in you a fountain springing into everlasting life,' I pray you to answer as she did—'Sir!—Lord!—give me this water, that I thirst not; neither come to earth's broken cisterns to draw.'

THE SECOND MIRACLE

'This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judæa into Galilee.'—JOHN iv. 54.

THE Evangelist evidently intends us to connect together the two miracles in Cana. His object may, possibly, be mainly chronological, and to mark the epochs in our Lord's ministry. But we cannot fail to see how remarkably these two miracles are contrasted. The one takes place at a wedding, a homely scene of rural festivity and gladness. But life has deeper things in it than gladness, and a Saviour who preferred the house of feasting to the house of mourning would be no Saviour for us. The second miracle, then, turns to

the darker side of human experience. The happiest home has its saddened hours; the truest marriage joy has associated with it many a care and many an anxiety. Therefore, He who began by breathing blessing over wedded joy goes on to answer the piteous pleading of parental anxiety. It was fitting that the first miracle should deal with gladness, for that is God's purpose for His creatures, and that the second should deal with sicknesses and sorrows, which are additions to that purpose made needful by sin.

Again, the first miracle was wrought without intercession, as the outcome of Christ's own determination that His hour for working it was come. The second miracle was drawn from Him by the imperfect faith and the agonising pleading of the father.

But the great peculiarity of this second miracle in Cana is that it is moulded throughout so as to develop and perfect a weak faith. Notice how there are three words in the narrative, each of which indicates a stage in the history. 'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not *believe*.' . . . 'The man *believed* the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.' . . . 'Himself *believed* and his whole house.'

We have here, then, Christ manifested as the Discerner, the Rebuker, the Answerer, and therefore the Strengtheners, of a very insufficient and ignorant faith. It is a lovely example of the truth of that ancient prophecy, 'He will not quench the smoking flax.' So these three stages, as it seems to me, are the three points to observe. We have, first of all, Christ lamenting over an imperfect faith. Then we have Him testing, and so strengthening, a growing faith. And then we have the absent Christ rewarding and crowning a tested faith. I think if we look at these three stages

in the story we shall get the main points which the Evangelist intends us to observe.

I. First, then, we have here our Lord lamenting over an ignorant and sensuous faith.

At first sight His words, in response to the hurried, eager appeal of the father, seem to be strangely unfeeling, far away from the matter in hand. Think of how breathlessly, feeling that not an instant is to be lost, the poor man casts himself at the Master's feet, and pleads that his boy is 'at the point of death.' And just think how, like a dash of cold water upon this hot impatience, must have come these strange words that seem to overleap his case altogether, and to be gazing beyond him—'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.' 'What has that to do with me and my dying boy, and my impatient agony of petition?' 'It has everything to do with you.'

It is the revelation, first of all, of Christ's singular calmness and majestic leisure, which befitted Him who needed not to hurry, because He was conscious of absolute power. As when the pleading message was sent to Him: 'He whom Thou lovest is sick, He abode still two days in the same place where He was'; because He loved Lazarus and Martha and Mary; and just as when Jairus is hurrying Him to the bed where his child lies dead, He pauses on the way to attend to the petition of another sufferer; so, in like calmness of majestic leisure, He here puts aside the apparently pressing and urgent necessity in order to deal with a far deeper, more pressing one.

For in the words there is not only a revelation of our Lord's majestic leisure, but there is also an indication of what He thought of most importance in His dealing with men. It was worthy of His care to heal

the boy; it was far more needful that He should train and lead the father to faith. The one can wait much better than the other.

And there is in the words, too, something like a sigh of profound sorrow. Christ is not so much rebuking as lamenting. It is His own pained heart that speaks; He sees in the man before Him more than the man's words indicated; reading his heart with that divine omniscience which pierces beyond the surface, and beholding in him the very same evil which affected all his countrymen. So He speaks to him as one of a class, and thus somewhat softens the rebuke even while the answer to the nobleman's petition seems thereby to become still less direct, and His own sorrowful gaze at the wide-reaching spirit of blindness seems thereby to become more absorbed and less conscious of the individual sufferer kneeling at His feet.

Christ had just come from Samaria, the scorn of the Jews, and there He had found people who needed no miracles, whose conception of the Messiah was not that of a mere wonder-worker, but of one who will 'tell us all things,' and who believed on Him not because of the portents which He wrought, but because they heard Him themselves, and His words touched their consciences and stirred strange longings in their hearts. On the other hand, this Evangelist has carefully pointed out in the preceding chapters how such recognition as Christ had thus far received 'in His own country' had been entirely owing to His miracles, and had been therefore regarded by Christ Himself as quite unreliable (chap. ii. 23-25), while even Nicodemus, the Pharisee, had seen no better reason for regarding Him as a divinely sent Teacher than 'these miracles that Thou doest.' And now here He is no sooner

across the border again than the same spirit meets Him. He hears it even in the pleading, tearful tones of the father's voice, and that so clearly that it is for a moment more prominent even to His pity than the agony and the prayer. And over that Christ sorrows. Why? Because, to their own impoverishing, the nobleman and his fellows were blind to all the beauty of His character. The graciousness of His nature was nothing to them. They had no eyes for His tenderness and no ears for His wisdom; but if some vulgar sign had been wrought before them, then they would have run after Him with their worthless faith. And that struck a painful chord in Christ's heart when He thought of how all the lavishing of His love, all the grace and truth which shone radiant and lambent in His life, fell upon blind eyes, incapable of beholding His beauty; and of how the manifest revelation of a Godlike character had no power to do what could be done by a mere outward wonder.

This is not to disparage the 'miraculous evidence.' It is only to put in its proper place the spirit, which was blind to the self-attesting glory of His character, which beheld it and did not recognise it as 'the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father.'

That very same blindness to the divine which is in Jesus Christ, because material things alone occupy the heart and appeal to the mind, is still the disease of humanity. It still drives a knife into the loving heart of the pitying and helpful Christ. The special form which it takes in such a story as this before us is long since gone. The sense-bound people of this generation do not ask for signs. Miracles are rather a hindrance than a help to the reception of Christianity in many quarters. People are more willing to admire, after

a fashion, the beauty of Christ's character, and the exalted purity of His teaching (meaning thereby, generally, the parts of it which are not exclusively His), than to accept His miracles. So far round has the turn in the wheel gone in these days.

But although the form is entirely different the spirit still remains. Are there not plenty of us to whom sense is the only certitude? We think that the only knowledge is the knowledge that comes to us from that which we can see and touch and handle, and the inferences that we may draw from these; and to many all that world of thought and beauty, all those divine manifestations of tenderness and grace, are but mist and cloudland. Intellectually, though in a somewhat modified sense, this generation has to take the rebuke: 'Except ye see, ye will not believe.'

And practically do not the great mass of men regard the material world as all-important, and work done or progress achieved there as alone deserving the name of 'work' or 'progress,' while all the glories of a loving Christ are dim and unreal to their sense-bound eyes? Is it not true to-day, as it was in the old time, that if a man would come among you, and bring you material good, that would be the prophet for you? True wisdom, beauty, elevating thoughts, divine revelations; all these go over your heads. But when a man comes and multiplies loaves, then you say, 'This is of a truth the prophet that should come into the world.' 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.'

And on the other side, is it not sadly true about those of us who have the purest and the loftiest faith, that we feel often as if it was very hard, almost impossible, to keep firm our grasp of One who never

is manifested to our sense? Do we not often feel, 'O that I could for once, for once only, hear a voice that would speak to my outward ear, or see some movement of a divine hand'? The loftiest faith still leans towards, and has an hankering after, some external and visible manifestation, and we need to subject ourselves to the illuminating rebuke of the Master who says, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe,' and, therefore, your faith that craves the support of some outward thing, and often painfully feels that it is feeble without it, is as yet but very imperfect and rudimentary.

II. And so we have here, as the next stage of the narrative, our Lord testing, and thus strengthening, a growing faith.

The nobleman's answer to our Lord's strange words sounds, at first sight, as if these had passed over him, producing no effect at all. 'Sir, come down ere my child die'; it is almost as if he had said, 'Do not talk to me about these things at present. Come and heal my boy. That is what I want; and we will speak of other matters some other time.' But it is not exactly that. Clearly enough, at all events, he did not read in Christ's words a reluctance to yield to his request, still less a refusal of it. Clearly he did not misunderstand the sad rebuke which they conveyed, else he would not have ventured to reiterate his petition. He does not pretend to anything more than he has, he does not seek to disclaim the condemnation that Christ brings against him, nor to assume that he has a loftier degree or a purer kind of faith than he possesses. He holds fast by so much of Christ's character as he can apprehend; and that is the beginning of all progress. What he knows he knows. He has sore

need; that is something. He has come to the Helper; that is more. He is only groping after Him, but he will not say a word beyond what he knows and feels; and, therefore, there is something in him to work upon; and faith is already beginning to bud and blossom. And so his prayer is his best answer to Christ's word: 'Sir, come down ere my child die.'

Ah! dear brethren, any true man who has ever truly gone to Christ with a sense even of some outward and temporal need, and has ever really prayed at all, has often to pass through this experience, that the first result of his agonising cry shall be only the revelation to him of the unworthiness and imperfection of his own faith, and that there shall seem to be strange delay in the coming of the blessing so longed for. And the true attitude for a man to take when there is unveiled before him, in his consciousness, in answer to his cry for help, the startling revelation of his own unworthiness and imperfection—the true answer to such dealing is simply to reiterate the cry. And then the Master bends to the petition, and because He sees that the second prayer has in it less of sensuousness than the first, and that some little germ of a higher faith is beginning to open, He yields, and yet He does not yield. 'Sir, come down ere my child die.' Jesus saith unto him, 'Go thy way, thy son liveth.'

Why did He not go with the suppliant? Why, in the act of granting, does He refuse? For the suppliant's sake. The whole force and beauty of the story come out yet more vividly if we take the contrast between it and the other narrative, which presents some points of similarity with it—that of the healing of the centurion's servant at Capernaum. There the centurion prays that Christ would but speak, and Christ says, 'I will

come.' There the centurion does not feel that His presence is necessary, but that His word is enough. Here the nobleman says 'Come,' because it has never entered his mind that Christ can do anything unless He stands like a doctor by the boy's bed. And he says, too, 'Come, *ere my child die*,' because it has never entered his mind that Christ can do anything if his boy has once passed the dark threshold.

And because his faith is thus feeble, Christ refuses its request, because He knows that so to refuse is to strengthen. Asked but to 'speak' by a strong faith, He rewards it by more than it prays, and offers to 'come.' Asked to 'come' by a weak faith, He rewards it by less, which yet is more, than it had requested; and refuses to come, that He may heal at a distance; and thus manifests still more wondrously His power and His grace.

His gentle and wise treatment is telling; and he who was so sense-bound that 'unless he saw signs and wonders he would not believe,' turns and goes away, bearing the blessing, as he trusts, in his hands, while yet there is no sign whatever that he has received it.

Think of what a change had passed upon that man in the few moments of his contact with Christ. When he ran to His feet, all hot and breathless and impatient, with his eager plea, he sought only for the deliverance of his boy, and sought it at the moment, and cared for nothing else. When he goes away from Him, a little while afterwards, he has risen to this height, that he believes the bare word, and turns his back upon the Healer, and sets his face to Capernaum in the confidence that he possesses the unseen gift. So has his faith grown.

And that is what you and I have to do. We have

Christ's bare word, and no more, to trust to for everything. We must be content to go out of the presence-chamber of the King with only His promise, and to cleave to that. A feeble faith requires the support of something sensuous and visible, as some poor trailing plant needs a prop round which it may twist its tendrils. A stronger faith strides away from the Master, happy and peaceful in its assured possession of a blessing for which it has nothing to rely upon but a simple bare word. That is the faith that we have to exercise. Christ has spoken. That was enough for this man, who from the babyhood of Christian experience sprang at once to its maturity. Is it enough for you? Are you content to say, 'Thy word, Thy naked word, is all that I need, for Thou hast spoken, and Thou wilt do it'?

'Go thy way; thy son liveth.' What a test! Suppose the father had not gone his way, would his son have lived? No! The son's life and the father's reception from Christ of what he asked were suspended upon that one moment. Will he trust Him, or will he not? Will he linger, or will he depart? He departs, and in the act of trusting he gets the blessing, and his boy is saved.

And look how the narrative hints to us of the perfect confidence of the father now. Cana was only a few miles from Capernaum. The road from the little city upon the hill down to where the waters of the lake flashed in the sunshine by the quays of Capernaum was only a matter of a few hours; but it was the next day, and well on into the next day, before he met the servants that came to him with the news of his boy's recovery. So sure was he that his petition was answered that he did not hurry to return home, but

leisurely and quietly went onwards the next day to his child. Think of the difference between the breathless rush up to Cana, and the quiet return from it. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'

III. And so, lastly, we have here the absent Christ crowning and rewarding the faith which has been tested.

We have the picture of the father's return. The servants meet him. Their message, which they deliver before he has time to speak, is singularly a verbal repetition of the promise of the Master, 'Thy son liveth.' His faith, though it be strong, has not yet reached to the whole height of the blessing, for he inquires 'at what hour he began to *amend*,' expecting some slow and gradual recovery; and he is told 'that at the seventh hour,' the hour when the Master spoke, 'the fever left him,' and all at once and completely was he cured. So, more than his faith had expected is given to him; and Christ, when he lays His hand upon a man, does His work thoroughly, though not always at once.

Why was the miracle wrought in that strange fashion? Why did our Lord fling out His power as from a distance rather than go and stand at the boy's bedside? We have already seen the reason in the peculiar condition of the father's mind; but now notice what it was that he had learned by such a method of healing, not only the fact of Christ's healing power, but also the fact that the bare utterance of His will, whether He were present or absent, had power. And so a loftier conception of Christ would begin to dawn on him.

And for us that working of Christ at a distance is prophetic. It represents to us His action to-day. Still

He answers our cries that He would come down to our help by sending forth from the city on the hills, the city of the wedding feast, His healing power to descend upon the sick-beds and the sorrows and the sins that afflict the villages beneath. 'He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth, His word runneth very swiftly.'

This new experience enlarged and confirmed the man's faith. The second stage to which he had been led by Christ's treatment was simply belief in our Lord's specific promise, an immense advance on his first position of belief which needed sight as its basis.

But he had not yet come to the full belief of, and reliance upon, that Healer recognised as Messiah. But the experience which he now has had, though it be an experience based upon miracle, is the parent of a faith which is not merely the child of wonder, nor the result of beholding an outward sign. And so we read:—'So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth. And himself believed and his whole house.'

A partial faith brings experience which confirms and enlarges faith; and they who dimly apprehend Him, and yet humbly love Him, and imperfectly trust Him, will receive into their bosoms such large gifts of His love and gracious Spirit that their faith will be strengthened, and they will grow into the full stature of peaceful confidence.

The way to increase faith is to exercise faith. And the true parent of perfect faith is the experience of the blessings that come from the crudest, rudest, narrowest, blindest, feeblest faith that a man can exercise. Trust Him as you can, do not be afraid of inadequate conceptions, or of a feeble grasp. Trust

Him as you can, and He will give you so much more than you expected that you will trust Him more, and be able to say: 'Now I believe, because I have heard Him myself, and know that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

THE THIRD MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.'—JOHN v. 8.

THIS third of the miracles recorded in John's Gospel finds a place there, as it would appear, for two reasons: first, because it marks the beginning of the angry unbelief on the part of the Jewish rulers, the development of which it is one part of the purpose of this Gospel to trace; second, because it is the occasion for that great utterance of our Lord about His Sonship and His divine working as the Father also works, which occupies the whole of the rest of the chapter, and is the foundation of much which follows in the Gospel. It is for these reasons, and not for the mere sake of adding another story of a miraculous cure to the many which the other Evangelists have given us, that John narrates for us this history.

If, then, we consider the reason for the introduction of the miracle into the Gospel, we may be saved from the necessity of dwelling, except very lightly, upon some of the preliminary details which preceded the actual cure. It does not matter much to us for our present purpose which Feast it was on which Jesus went up to Jerusalem, nor whether the pool was by the sheep-market or by the sheep-gate, nor where-

abouts in Jerusalem Bethesda might happen to be. It may be of importance for us to notice that the mention of the angel who appears in the fourth verse is not a part of the original narrative. The true text only tells us of an intermittent pool which possessed, or was supposed to possess, curative energy; and round which the kindness of some forgotten benefactor had built five rude porches. There lay a crowd of wasted forms, and pale, sorrowful faces, with all varieties of pain and emaciation and impotence marked upon them, who yet were gathered in Bethesda, which being interpreted means 'a house of mercy.' It is the type of a world full of men suffering various sicknesses, but all sick; the type of a world that gathers with an eagerness, not far removed from despair, round anything that seems to promise, however vaguely, to help and to heal; the type of a world, blessed be God, which, amidst all its sad variety of woe and weariness, yet sits in the porches of 'a house of mercy,' and has in the midst a 'fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,' whose energy is as mighty for the last comer of all the generations as for the first that stepped into its cleansing flood.

This poor man, sick and impotent for eight and thirty years—many of which he had spent, as it would appear, day by day, wearily dragging his paralysed limbs to the fountain with daily diminishing hope—this poor man attracts the regard of Christ when He enters, and He puts to him the strange question, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' Surely there was no need to ask that; but no doubt the many disappointments and the long years of waiting and of suffering had stamped apathy upon the sufferer's face, and Christ saw that the first thing that was needed, in order that His

healing power might have a point of contact in the man's nature, was to kindle some little flicker of hope in him once more.

And so, no doubt, with a smile on His face, which converted the question into an offer, He says: 'Wilt thou be made whole?' meaning thereby to say, 'I will heal thee if thou wilt.' And there comes the weary answer, as if the man had said: 'Will I be made whole? What have I been lying here all these years for? I have nobody to put me into the pool.'

Yes, it is a hopeful prospect to hold out to a man whose disease is inability to walk, that if he will walk to the water he will get cured, and be able to walk afterwards. Why, he could not even roll himself into the pond, and so there he had lain, a type of the hopeless efforts at self-healing which we sick men put forth, a type of the tantalising gospels which the world preaches to its subjects when it says to a paralysed man: 'Walk that you may be healed; keep the commandments that you may enter into life.'

And so we have come at last to the main point of the narrative before us, and I fix upon these words, the actual words in which the cure was conveyed, as communicating to us some very important lessons and thoughts about Christ and our relation to Him.

I. First, I see in them Christ manifesting Himself as the Giver of power to the powerless who trust Him.

His words may seem at first hearing to partake of the very same almost cruel irony as the condition of cure which had already proved hopelessly impracticable. He, too, says, 'Walk that you may be cured'; and He says it to a paralysed and impotent man. But the two things are very different, for before this cripple could attempt to drag his impotent limbs into

an upright position, and take up the little light couch and sling it over his shoulders, he must have had some kind of trust in the person that told him to do so. A very ignorant trust, no doubt, it was; but all that was set before him about Jesus Christ he grasped and rested upon. He only knew Him as a Healer, and he trusted Him as such. The contents of a man's faith have nothing to do with the reality of his faith; and he that, having only had the healing power of Christ revealed to him, lays hold of that Healer, cleaves to Him with as genuine a faith as the man who has the whole fulness and sublimity of Christ's divine and human character and redeeming work laid out before him, and who cleaves to these. The hand that grasps is one, whatsoever be the thing that it grasps.

So it is no spiritualising of this story, or reading into it a deeper and more religious meaning than belongs to it, to say that what passed in that man's heart and mind before he caught up his little bed and walked away with it, was essentially the same action of mind and heart by which a sinful man, who knows that Christ is his Redeemer, grasps His Cross and trusts his soul to Him. In the one case, as in the other, there is confidence in the person; only in the one case the person was only known as a Healer, and in the other the person is known as a Saviour. But the faith is the same whatever it apprehends.

Christ comes and says to him, 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk.' There is a movement of confidence in the man's heart; he tries to obey, and in the act of obedience the power comes to him.

Ah, brother! it is always so. All Christ's commandments are gifts. When He says to you, 'Do this!' He pledges Himself to give you power to do it. Whatso-

ever He enjoins He strengthens for. He binds Himself, by His commandments, and every word of His lips which says to us 'Thou shalt!' contains as its kernel a word of His which says 'I will.' So when He commands, He bestows; and we get the power to keep His commandments when in humble faith we make the effort to do His will. It is only when we try to obey for the love's sake of Him that has healed us that we are able to obey. And be sure of this, whensoever we attempt to do what we know to be the Master's will, because He has given Himself for us, our power will be equal to our desire, and enough for our duty. As St. Augustine says: 'Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.'

'Rise, take up thy bed and walk,' or as in another case, 'Stretch forth thy hand.' 'And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored whole as the other.' Christ gives power to keep His commandments to the impotent who try to obey, because they have been healed by Him.

II. In the next place, we have in this miracle our Lord set forth as the absolute Master, because He is the Healer.

The Pharisees and their friends had no eyes for the miracle; but if they found a man carrying his light couch on the Sabbath day, that was a thing that excited their interest, and must be seen to immediately.

And so, paying no attention to the fact that it was a paralysed man who was doing this, with the true narrow instinct of the formalist, they lay hold only of the fact of the broken Rabbinical restrictions, and try to stop him with these. 'It is the Sabbath day! It is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.'

And they get an answer which goes a great deal

deeper than the speaker knew, and puts the whole subject of Christian obedience on its right footing. 'He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.' As if he had said: 'He gave me the power, had He not a right to tell me what to do with it? It was His gift that I could lift my bed; was I not bound to walk when and where He that had made me able to walk at all chose to bid me?'

And if you generalise that it just comes to this: the only person that has a right to command you is the Christ who saves you. He has the absolute authority to do as He will with your restored spiritual powers, because He has bestowed them all upon you. His dominion is built upon His benefits. He is the King because He is the Saviour. He rules because He has redeemed. He begins with giving, and it is only afterwards that He commands; and He turns to each of us with that smile upon His lips, and with tenderness in His voice which will bind any man, who is not an ingrate, to Him for ever. 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.'

There is always something hard and distasteful to the individual will in the tone of authority assumed by any man whatsoever. We always more or less rebel and shrink from that; and there is only one thing that makes commandment sweet, and that is when it drops like honey from the honeycomb, from lips that we love. So does it in the case of Christ's commands to us. It is joy to know and to do the will of One to whom the whole heart turns with gratitude and affection. And Christ blesses and privileges us by the communication to us of His pleasure concerning us, that we may have the gladness of yielding to

His desires, and so meeting the love which commands with the happy love which obeys. 'He that made me whole, the same said unto me . . .' and what He says it must be joy to do.

So, 'My yoke is easy and My burden is light,' not because Christ diminishes the requirements of law; not because the standard of Christian obedience is lowered beneath any other standard of conduct and character. It is far higher. The things which make Christian duty are often very painful in themselves. There is always self-sacrifice in Christian virtue, and self-sacrifice has always a sting in it; but the 'yoke is easy and the burden is light,' because, if I may so say, the yoke is padded with the softest velvet of love, and lies upon our necks lightly because He has laid it there. All the rigid harshness of precept is done away when the precept comes from Christ's lips, and His commandment 'makes the crooked things straight and the rough places plain'; and turns duty, distasteful duty, into joyful service. The blessed basis of Christian obedience, and of Christ's authority, is Christ's redemption.

III. And then, still further, we have here our Lord setting Himself forth as the divine Son, whose working needs and knows no rest.

We find, in the subsequent part of the chapter, that 'the Jews,' as they are called, by which is meant the antagonistic portion of the nation, sought to slay Christ 'because He had done these things on the Sabbath day.' But Jesus answered them, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' Unquestionably the form which the healing took was intended by our Lord to bring into prominence the very point which these pedantic casuists laid hold of. He meant to draw

attention to His sweeping aside of the Rabbinical casuistries of the law of the Sabbath. And He meant to do it in order that He might have the occasion of making this mighty claim, which is lodged in these solemn and profound words, to possess a Sonship, which, like the divine working, wrought, needing and knowing no repose.

‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.’ The rest, which the old story in Genesis attributed to the Creator after the Creation, was not to be construed as if it meant the rest of inactivity; but it was the rest of continuous action. God’s rest and God’s work are one. Throughout all the ages preservation is a continuous creation. The divine energy is streaming out for evermore, as the bush that burns unconsumed, as the sun that flames undiminished for ever, pouring out from the depth of that divine nature, and for ever sustaining a universe. So that there is no Sabbath, in the sense of a cessation from action, proper to the divine nature; because all His action is repose, and ‘e’en in His very motion there is rest.’ And this divine coincidence of activity and of repose belongs to the divine Son in His divine-human nature. With that arrogance which is the very audacity of blasphemy, if it be not the simplicity of a divine consciousness, He puts His own work side by side with the Father’s work, as the same in principle, the same in method, the same in purpose, the same in its majestic coincidence of repose and of energy.

‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore for Me, as for Him, there is no need of a Sabbath of repose.’ Human activity is dissipated by toil, human energy is exhausted by expenditure. Man works and is weary; man works and is distracted. For the

recovery of the serenity of his spirit, and for the renewal of his physical strength, repose of body and gathering in of mind, such as the Sabbath brought, were needed; but neither is needed for Him who toils unwearied in the heavens; and neither is needed for the divine nature of Him who labours in labours parallel with the Father's here upon the earth.

Now remember that this is no abolition of the Sabbatic rest for Christ's followers. Rather the ground on which He here asserts His superiority over, and His non-dependence upon, such a repose shows, or at all events implies, that all mere human workers need such rest, and should thankfully accept it. But it is a claim on His part to a divine equality. It is a claim on His part to do works which are other than human works. It is a claim on His part to be the Lord of a divine institution, living above the need of it, and able to mould it at His will.

And so it opens up depths, into which we cannot go now, of the relations of that divine Father and that divine Son; and makes us feel that the little incident in which He turned to a paralysed man and said: 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk,' on the Sabbath day, like some small floating leaf of sea-weed upon the surface, has great deep tendrils that go down and down into the very abyss of things, and lays hold upon that central truth of Christianity, the divinity of the Son of God, who is One with the ever-working Father.

IV. Lastly, we have in this incident yet another lesson. We have the Healer who is also the Judge, warning the healed of the possibilities of a relapse.

'Jesus findeth him in the Temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.' The man's eight-

and-thirty years of illness had apparently been brought on by dissipation. It was a sin of flesh, avenged in the flesh, that had given him that miserable life. One would have thought he had got warning enough, but we all know the old proverb about what happened when the devil was ill, and what befell his resolutions when he got better. And so Christ comes to him again with this solemn warning: 'There is a worse thing than eight-and-thirty years of paralysis. You fell once, and sore was your punishment. If you fall twice, your punishment will be sorer.' Why? Because the first one had done him no good. So here are lessons for us. There is always danger that we shall fall back into old sins, even if we think we have overcome them. The mystic influence of habit, enfeebled will, the familiar temptation, the imagination rebelling, the memory tempting, sometimes even, as in the case of a man that has been a drunkard, the physical effect of the odour of his temptation upon his nostrils—all these things make it extremely unlikely that a man who has once been under the condemnation of any evil shall never be tempted to fall under its sway again.

And such a fall is not only more criminal than the former, it is more deadly than the former. 'It were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn aside.' 'The last state of that man is worse than the first.'

My brother, there is no blacker condemnation; and if I may use a strong word, there is no hotter hell, than that which belongs to an apostate Christian. 'It has happened unto them according to the true proverb. The dog is turned to his vomit again.' Very unpolite,

a very coarse metaphor? Yes; to express a far worse reality.

Christian men and women! you have been made whole. 'Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.' And turn to that Lord and say, 'Hold Thou me up and I shall be saved.' Then the enemies will not be able to recapture you, and the chains which have dropped from your wrists will never enclose them any more.

THE LIFE-GIVER AND JUDGE

'But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. 18. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. 19. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth: and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. 22. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. 26. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; 27. And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.'—JOHN v. 17-27.

'THE Jews' were up in arms because Jesus had delivered a man from thirty-eight years of misery. They had no human sympathies for the sufferer, whom hope deferred had made sick and hopeless, but they shuddered at the breach of the Sabbath. 'Sacrifice' was more important in their view than 'mercy.' They did not acknowledge that the miracle proved Christ's Messiahship, but they were quite sure that doing it on the Sabbath proved His wickedness. How

formalism twists men's judgments of the relative magnitude of form and spirit!

Jesus' vindication of His action roused them still farther, for He put it on a ground which seemed to them nothing short of blasphemy: 'My Father worketh even until now, and I work.' They fastened on one point in that great saying, namely, that it claimed Sonship in a special sense, and vindicated His right to disregard the Sabbath law on that ground. God's rest is not inaction. 'Preservation is a continual creation.' All being subsists because God is ever working. The Son co-operates with the Father, and for Him, as for the Father, the Sabbath law does not apply. The charge of breaking the Sabbath fades into insignificance before the sin, in the objectors' eyes, of making such claims. Therefore our Lord proceeds to expand and justify them.

He makes, first, a general statement in verses 19 and 20, in which He sets forth the relation involved in the very idea of Fatherhood and Sonship. He, as perfect Son of God, is perfectly one with the Father in will and act, and so knit to Him in sympathy that a self-originated action is impossible, not by reason of defect of power, but by reason of unity of being. That perfect unity is expressed negatively ('can do nothing') and then positively ('doeth likewise'). But it is not manifest in actions alone, but has its deep roots in the perfect love which flows ever from each to each, and in the Father's perfect communication to the Son, and the Son's perfect reception from the Father. Jesus claimed to stand in such a relation to the Father that He was able to do whatsoever the Father did, and 'in like manner' as the Father did it; that He was the unique object of the Father's love, and capable of receiving

complete communications as to 'all things that Himself doeth'; that He lived in such complete unity with the Father that His every act was the result of it, and that no trace of self-will had ever tinged His perfect spirit. What man has ever made such claims and not been treated as insane? He makes them, and likewise says that He is 'lowly of heart'; and the world listens, if not believing, at any rate reverent, as in the presence of the best man that ever lived. Strange goodness, to claim such divine prerogatives, unless the claim is valid!

It is expanded in verses 21-23 into two great classes of works, which Jesus says that He does. Both are distinctively divine works. To give life and to judge the world are equally beyond human power; they are equally His actions. These are the 'greater works' which He foretells in verse 20, and they are greater than the miracle of healing which had originated the whole conversation. To give life at first, and to give it again to the dead, and not only to revivify, but to raise them, are plainly competent to no power short of the divine; and here Jesus calmly claims them.

That tremendous claim is here made in the widest sense, including both the corporeally and the spiritually dead, who are afterwards treated of separately. The Son is the fountain of life in all the aspects of that wide-reaching word; and He 'quickeneth whom He will,' as He had spontaneously healed the impotent man. Does that assertion contradict the other, just before it, that He does nothing of Himself? No; for His will, while His, is ever harmonious with the Father's, just as His love, which is ever coincident with the Father's. Does that assertion imply His arbitrary pleasure, or make man's will a cipher? No; for His

will is guided by righteous love, and wills to quicken those who comply with His conditions. But the assertion does declare that His will to quicken is omnipotent, and that His voice can pierce 'the dull, cold ear of death,' and bring back the soul to the empty house of this tabernacle, or rouse the spirit 'dead in trespasses.'

The other divine prerogative of judging is inseparable from that of revivifying, and in regard to it Christ's claim is still higher, for He says that it is wholly vested in Him as Son. The idea of judgment here, like that of quickening, with which it is associated, is to be taken in its more general sense ('*all* judgment'), and therefore as including both the present judgment, for which Jesus said that He was come into the world, and which men pass on themselves by the very fact of their attitude to Him and His Gospel, and also the future final judgment, which manifests character and determines destiny. Both these has the Father given into the hands of the Son.

The purpose, so far as men are concerned, of the Son's investiture, with these solemn prerogatives, is that He may receive universal divine honour. A narrower purpose was stated in verse 20, where the persons seeing His works are only His then audience, and the effect sought to be produced is merely 'marvel.' But wonder is meant to lead on to recognition of the meaning of His power, and of the mystery of His person, and that, again, to rendering to Him precisely the same honour as is due to the Father. No more unmistakable demand for worship, no more emphatic assertion of divinity, can be made than lie in these words. To worship Christ does not intercept the honour due to God; to worship the Son is to worship

the Father; and no man honours the Father who sent Him who does not honour the Son whom He has sent.

In verses 24-27 the two related prerogatives are presented in their spiritual aspect, while in the later verses of the chapter the resurrection and quickening of the literally dead are dealt with. Mark the significant new term introduced in verse 24, 'He that believeth.' That spiritual resurrection from the death of sin and self is wrought on 'whom He will,' but He wills that it shall be wrought on them who believe. Similarly, in verse 25, it is 'they that hear' who 'shall live.' It must be so, for there is no other way by which life from Him, who is the Life, can pass into and quicken us than by our opening our hearts by faith for its inflow. The mysteries of the Son's divinity and of His imparted life are deep, but the condition of receiving that life is plain. If we will trust Jesus, we shall live; if not, we are dead. Trusting Him is trusting the Father that sent Him, and that Father becomes accessible to our trust when we 'hear' Christ's 'word.'

The effects of faith are immediate, and the poor present may be enriched and clothed in celestial light for each of us, if we will. For Jesus does not point first to the mysteries of the resurrection of the dead, and the tremendous solemnities of the final judgment, but to what we may each enter upon at any moment. The believing man '*hath* eternal life,' and 'cometh not into judgment.' That life is not reserved to be entered on in the blessed future, but is a present possession. True, it will blossom into unexampled nobleness when it is transported into its native country, like some exotic in our colder climates if it were carried back to the tropics. But it is a present possession, and heaven is not different in kind from the Christian life on earth,

but differs mainly in degree and in circumstances. And he that has the life here and now is, by its moulding of his outward life, preserved from the sins which would bring him into judgment, and the merciful judgment to which he is still subject is that for which his truest self longs. And that blessed condition carries in it the pledge that, at the last great day, which is to others a 'day of wrath, a dreadful day,' he whom Christ has quickened by His own indwelling life shall have 'boldness before Him.'

Obviously, in these verses the present effects of faith are in view, since Jesus emphatically declares that the 'hour now is' when they can be realised. Once more He states in the strongest terms, and as the reason for the assurance that faith secures to us life, His possession of the two divine prerogatives of quickening and judging. What a paradox it is to say that it is '*given*' to Him to have 'life in *Himself*'! And when was that gift given? In the depths of eternity.

He 'sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be,' and hence He can impart life and lose none. Inseparably connected with that given, and yet self-inherent, life, is the capacity for executing judgment which belongs to Him as 'a Son of man.' It has been as 'the Son' of the Father that it has been considered, in the previous verses, as belonging to Him; but now it is as a true man that He is fitted to bear, and actually is clothed with, that judicial power. No doubt He is Judge of all, because by His incarnation and earthly life He presents to all the offer of eternal life, by their attitude to which offer men are judged. But the connection of thought seems rather to be that Christ's Manhood, inextricably intertwined with His divinity, is equally needed with the latter to constitute Him our

Judge. He 'knoweth our frame,' from the inside, as it were, and the participation in our nature which fits Him to 'be a merciful and faithful High Priest' also fits Him to be the Judge of mankind.

THE FOURTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.'—JOHN vi. 11.

THIS narrative of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand is introduced into John's Gospel with singular abruptness. We read in the first verse of the chapter: 'After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee,' *i.e.* from the western to the eastern side. But the Evangelist does not tell us how or when He got to the western side. 'These things,' which are recorded in the previous chapter, are the healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, the consequent outburst of Jewish hostility, and the profound and solemn discourse of our Lord, in which He claims filial relationship to the Father. So that we must insert between the chapters a journey from Jerusalem to Galilee, and a lapse at all events of some months—or, if the feast referred to in the previous chapter be, as it may be, the Passover, an interval of nearly a year. So little care for the mere framework of events has this fourth Gospel; so entirely would the Evangelist have us see that his reason for narrating this miracle is mainly its spiritual lessons and the revelation which it makes of Christ as Himself the Bread of Life.

Similarly, he has no care to tell us anything about

the reasons for our Lord's retirement with His disciples from Galilee to the eastern bank. These we have to learn from the other Evangelists. They give us several concurrent motives—the news of the death of John the Baptist; and of the desire of the bloody tyrant to see Jesus, which foreboded evil; also the return of the twelve Apostles from their trial journey, which involved the necessity of rest for them; and, perhaps, the approach of the Passover, which our Lord did not purpose to observe in Jerusalem because of the Jewish hostility, and which, therefore, suggested the withdrawal to temporary retirement.

All these reasons concurring, He and His disciples would seek for a brief space of seclusion and repose. But the hope of securing such was vain. The people followed in crowds so eagerly, so hastily, in such enormous numbers, that no natural or ordinary provision for their wants could be thought of. Hence the occasion for the miracle before us.

Now I think that this narrative, with which I wish to deal, falls mainly into two portions, both of which suggest for us some important lessons. There is, first, the preparations for the sign; and then there is the sign itself. Let us look at these two points in succession.

I. First, then, the preparations for the sign.

Now it is to be observed that this is the only incident before our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem which is recorded by all four Evangelists; therefore the variations between the narratives are of especial interest, and these variations are very considerable. We find, for instance, that in John's account the question as to how the bread was to be provided came from Christ; in the other Evangelists' accounts that question is dis-

cussed first amongst the Apostles privately. We find from John's narrative that the question was suggested even before the multitudes had come to Jesus. We find in the Synoptic Gospels that it arose at the close of a long day of teaching and of healing.

Now it is possible that this diversity of time may be the solution of the diversity of the person proposing. That is to say, it is quite legitimate to conclude that John's account takes up the incident at an earlier period than the other Evangelists do, and that the full order of events was this; that, privately, at the beginning of the day, whilst the people were yet flocking to our Lord, He, to one of the disciples alone, suggests the question, 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?' and that the answer, 'Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient that every one of them may take a little,' explains for us the suggestion of the same amount at a subsequent part of the day, by the Apostles when they asked our Lord the question, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread that these may eat?'

Be that as it may, we may pause for a moment upon this question of our Lord's, 'Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?'

Now notice what a lovely glimpse we get there into the quick-rising sympathy of the Saviour with all forms of human necessity. He had gone away to snatch a brief moment of rest. The rest is denied Him; the hurrying crowds come pressing with their vulgar curiosity—for it was nothing better—after Him. No movement of impatience passes across His mind; no reluctance as He turns away from the vanishing prospect of a quiet afternoon with His friends. He looks upon them, and the first thought is a quick, instinctive

movement of a divine and yet most human sympathy. The question rises in His mind of how He was to provide for them; they were not hungry yet; they had not thought where their bread was to come from. But He cared for the careless, and His heart was prophetic of their necessities, and quick to determine 'what He should do' to supply them. So is it ever. Before we call, He answers. Thy mercy, O loving Christ! needs no more than the sight of human necessities, or even the anticipation of them, swiftly to bestir itself for their satisfaction and their supply.

But, farther, He selects for the question Philip, a man who seems to have been what is called—as if it were the highest praise—an 'intensely practical person'; who seems to have had little faith in anything that he could not get hold of by his senses, and who lived upon the low level of 'common sense.' He always lays stress upon 'seeing.' His answer to Nathanael when he said, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' was, 'Come and see.' A very good answer, and yet one that relies only on the external manifestation of Christ to the senses. Then, on another occasion, he breaks in upon the lofty spiritualities of our Lord's final discourse to His disciples, with the *malapropos* request, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' And so here, to the man who believed in his eyesight, and did not easily apprehend much else, Jesus puts this question, 'Where is the bread to come from for all these people? This He said to prove him.' He hoped that the question might have shaped itself in the hearer's mind into a promise, and that he might have been able to say in answer, 'Thou canst supply; we need not buy.'

So Christ does still. He puts problems before us, too, to settle; takes us, as it were, into His confidence with

interrogations that try us, whether we can rise above the level of the material and visible, or whether all our conceptions of possibilities are bounded by these. And sometimes, even though the question at first sight seems to evoke only such a response as it did here, it works more deeply down below afterwards, and we are helped by the very difficulty to rise to a clear faith.

Philip's answer is very significant. 'Two hundred pennyworth of bread are not sufficient.' He casts his eye over the multitude, he makes a rough, rapid calculation, one does not exactly see the data on which it was based; and he comes to the conclusion, 'Two hundred pennyworth' (in our English money some £7 or £8 worth) would give them each a morsel. And no doubt he thought himself very practical. He was a man of figures; he believed in what could be put into tables and statistics. Yes; and like a great many other people of his sort, he left out one small element in his calculation, and that was Jesus Christ, and so his answer went creeping along the low levels, dragging itself like a half-wounded snake, when it might have risen on the wings of faith into the empyrean, and soared and sung.

So learn that when we have to deal with Christ's working—and when have we not to deal with Christ's working?—perhaps probabilities that can be tabulated are not altogether the best bases upon which to rest our calculations. Learn that the audacity of a faith that expects great things, though there be nothing visible upon which to build, is wiser and more prudent than the creeping common-sense that adheres to facts which are shadows, and forgets that the chief fact is that we have an Almighty Helper and Friend at our sides.

Still further, among these preliminaries, let us point to the exhibition of the inadequate resources which Christ, according to the fuller narrative in the other Evangelists, desired to know. 'There is a little lad here with five barley loaves'—one per thousand—'and two small fishes'—insufficient in quantity and very, very common in quality, for barley bread was the food of the poorest. 'But what are they among so many?' And Christ says, 'Bring them to Me.'

Christ's preparation for making our poor resources adequate for anything is to drive home into our hearts the consciousness of their insufficiency. We need, first of all, to be brought to this, 'All that I have is this wretched little stock; and what is that measured against the work that I have to do, and the claims upon me?' Only when we are brought to that can His great power pour itself into us and fill us with rejoicing and overcoming strength. The old mystics used to say, and they said truly: 'You must be emptied of yourself before you can be filled by God.' And the first thing for any man to learn, in preparation for receiving a mightier power than his own into his opening heart, is to know that all his own strength is utter and absolute weakness. 'What are they among so many?' When we have once gone right down into the depths of felt impotence, and when our work has risen before us, as if it were far too great for our poor strengths which are weaknesses, then we are brought, and only then, into the position in which we may begin to hope that power equal to our desire will be poured into our souls.

And so the last of the preparations that I will touch upon is that majestic preparation for blessing by obedience. 'And Jesus said, Make the men sit down.' And there they sat themselves, as Mark puts it in his

picturesque way, like so many garden plots—the rectangular oblongs in a garden in which pot-herbs are grown—on the green grass, below the blue sky, by the side of the quiet lake. Cannot you fancy how some of them seated themselves with a scoff, and some with a quiet smile of incredulity; and some half sheepishly and reluctantly; and some in mute expectancy; and some in foolish wonder; and yet all of them with a partial obedience? And says John in the true translation: ‘So the men sat down, therefore Jesus took the loaves.’ Sit you down where He bids you, and your mouths will not be long empty. Do the things He tells you, and you will get the food that you need. Our business is to obey and to wait, and His business is, when we are seated, to open His hand and let the mercy drop. So much for the preparations for this great miracle.

II. Now, in the next place, a word as to the sign itself.

I take two lessons, and two only, out of it. I see in it, first, a revelation of Christ, as continually through all the ages sustaining men’s physical life. And I see in it, second, a symbol of Christ as Himself the Bread of Life.

As to the first, there is here, I believe, a revelation of the law of the universe, of Christ as being through all the ages the Sustainer of the physical life of men. What was done then once, with the suppression of certain links in the chain, is done always, with the introduction of those links. The miraculous moment in the narrative is not described to us. We do not know where or when there came in the supernatural power which multiplied the loaves—probably as they passed from the hand of the Master. But be that as

it may, it was Christ's will that made the provision which fed all these five thousand. And I believe that the teaching of Scripture is in accordance with the deepest philosophy, that the one cause of all physical phenomena is the will of a present God; howsoever that may usually conform to the ordinary method of working which people generalise and call laws. The reason why anything is, and the reason why all things change, is the energy there and then of the indwelling God who is in all His works, and who is the only Will and Power in the physical world.

And I believe, further, that Scripture teaches us that that continuous will, which is the cause of all phenomena and the underlying subsistence on which all things repose, is all managed and mediated by Him who from of old was named the Word; 'in whom was life, and without whom was not anything made that was made.' Our Christ is Creator, our Christ is Sustainer, our Christ moves the stars and feeds the sparrows. He was 'before all things, and in Him all things consist.' He opens His hand—and there is the print of a nail in it—and 'satisfies the desire of every living thing.'

So learn how to think of second causes, and see in this story a transient manifestation, in unusual form, of an eternal and permanent fact. Jesus took the loaves and distributed to them that were set down.

And so, secondly, the miracle is a *sign*—a symbol of Him as the true Bread and Food of the world. That is the explanation and commentary which He Himself appends to it in the subsequent part of the chapter, in the great discourse which is founded upon this miracle.

'I am the Bread of Life.' There is a triple statement by our Lord upon this subject in the remaining portion

of the chapter. He says, 'I am the Bread of Life.' My personality is that which not only sustains life when it is given, but gives life to them that feed upon it. But more than that, 'the bread which I will give,' pointing to some future 'giving' beyond the present moment, and therefore something more than His life and example, 'is My flesh, which'—in some as yet unexplained way—'I give for the life of the world.' And that there may be no misunderstanding, there is a third, deeper, more mysterious statement still: 'My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' Repulsive and paradoxical, but in its very offensiveness and paradox, proclaiming that it covers a mighty truth, and the truth, brother, is this, the one Food that gives life to will, affections, conscience, understanding, to the whole spirit of a man, is that great Sacrifice of the Incarnate Lord who gave upon the Cross His flesh, and on the Cross shed His blood, for the life of the world that was 'dead in trespasses and sins.' Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us, and we feed on the sacrifice. Let your conscience, your heart, your desires, your anticipations, your understanding, your will, your whole being feed on Him. He will be cleansing, He will be love, He will be fruition, He will be hope, He will be truth, He will be righteousness, He will be all. Feed upon Him by that faith which is the true eating of the true Bread, and your souls shall live.

And notice finally here, the result of this miracle as transferred to the region of symbol. 'They did all eat and were filled'; men, women, children, both sexes, all ages, all classes, found the food that they needed in the bread that came from Christ's hands. If any man wants dainties that will tickle the palates of Epicureans, let him go somewhere else. But if he wants bread,

to keep the life in and to stay his hunger, let him go to this Christ who is 'human nature's daily food.'

The world has scoffed for nineteen centuries at the barley bread that the Gospel provides; coarse by the side of its confectionery, but it is enough to give life to all who eat it. It goes straight to the primal necessities of human nature. It does not coddle a class, or pander to unwholesome, diseased, or fastidious appetites. It is the food of the world, and not of a section. All men can relish it, all men need it. It is offered to them all.

And more than that; notice the inexhaustible abundance. 'They did all eat, and were filled.' And then they took up—not 'of the fragments,' as our Bible gives it, conveying the idea of the crumbs that littered the grass after the repast was over, but of the 'broken pieces'—the portions that came from Christ's hands—twelve baskets full, an immensely greater quantity than they had to start with. 'The gift doth stretch itself as 'tis received.' Other goods and other possessions perish with the using, but this increases with use. The more one eats, the more there is for him to eat. And all the world may live upon it for ever, and there will be more at the end than there was at the beginning.

Brethren, why do ye 'spend your money for that which is not bread'? There is no answer worthy of a rational soul, no answer that will stand either the light of conscience or the clearer light of the Day of Judgment. I come to you now, and although my poor words may be but like the barley bread and the two fishes—nothing amongst all this gathered audience—I come with Christ in my hands, and I say to you, 'Eat, and your souls shall live.' He will spread a table for

you in the wilderness, and take you to sit at last at His table in His Kingdom.

‘FRAGMENTS’ OR ‘BROKEN PIECES’

‘When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.’—JOHN vi. 12.

THE Revised Version correctly makes a very slight, but a very significant change in the words of this verse. Instead of ‘fragments’ it reads ‘broken pieces.’ The change seems very small, but the effect of it is considerable. It helps our picture of the scene by correcting a very common misapprehension as to what it was which the Apostles are bid to gather up. The general notion, I suppose, is that the ‘fragments’ are the crumbs that fell from each man’s hands, as he ate, and the picture before the imagination of the ordinary reader is that of the Apostles’ carefully collecting the *débris* of the meal from the grass where it had dropped. But the true notion is that the ‘broken pieces which remain over’ are the unused portions into which our Lord’s miracle-working hand had broken the bread, and the true picture is that of the Apostles carefully putting away in store for future use the abundant provision which their Lord had made, beyond the needs of the hungry thousands. And that conception of the command teaches far more beautiful and deeper lessons than the other.

For if the common translation and notion be correct, all that is taught us, or at least what is principally taught us, is the duty of thrift and careful economy; whereas the other shows more clearly that what is taught us is that Jesus Christ always gets ready for His

people something over and above the exact limits of their bare need at the moment, that He prepares for His poor and hungry dependants in royal fashion, leaving ever a wide margin of difference between what would be just enough to keep the life in them, and His liberal housekeeping. Further, we are taught a lesson of wise husbandry and economy in the use of that overplus of grace which Christ ministers, and are instructed that the laws of prudent thrift have as honoured a place in the management of spiritual as of temporal wealth. 'Gather up,' says our Lord, 'the pieces which I broke, the large provision which I made for possible wants. My gifts are in excess of the requirements of the moment. Take care of them till you need them.' That is a worthier interpretation of His command than one which merely sees in it an exhortation to thrifty taking care of the crumbs that fell from the lips of the hungry eaters.

Looking at this command, then, with this slight alteration of rendering, and consequent widening of scope, we may briefly try to gather up the lessons which it obviously suggests.

I. We have that thought, to which I have already referred, as more strikingly brought out by the slight alteration of translation, which, by the use of '*broken pieces*,' suggests the connection with Christ's *breaking* the loaves and fishes. We are taught to think of the large surplus in Christ's gifts over and above our need. Our Lord has Himself given us a commentary upon this miracle. All Christ's miracles are parables, for all teach us, on the level of natural and outward things, lessons that are true in regard to the spiritual world; but this one is especially symbolical, as indeed are all these recorded in John's Gospel. And here

we have Christ, on the day after the miracle, commenting upon it in His long and profound discourse upon the Bread of Life, which plainly intimates that He meant His office of feeding the hungry crowds, with bread supernaturally increased by the touch of His hand, to be but a picture and a guide which might lead to the apprehension of the higher view of Himself as the ‘bread of God which came down from heaven,’ feeding and ‘giving life to the world’ by His broken body and shed blood.

So that we are not inventing a fanciful interpretation of an incident not meant to have any meaning deeper than shows on the surface, when we say that the abundance far beyond what the eaters could make use of at the moment really represented the large surplus of inexhaustible resources and unused grace which is treasured for us all in Christ Jesus. Whom He feeds He feasts. His gifts answer our need, and over-answer it, for He is ‘able to do exceeding abundantly above that which we ask or think,’ and neither our conceptions, nor our petitions, nor our present powers of receiving, are the real limits of the illimitable grace that is laid up for us in Christ, and which, potentially, we have each of us in our hands whenever we lay our hands on Him.

Oh, dear friends! what you and I have ever had and felt of Christ’s power, sweetness, preciousness, and love is as nothing compared with the infinite depths of all those which lie in Him. The sea fills the little creeks along its shore, but it rolls in unfathomed depths, boundless to the horizon away out there in the mid-Atlantic. And all the present experience of all Christian people, of what Christ is, is like the experience of the first settlers in some great undis-

covered continent; who timidly plant a little fringe of population round its edge and grow their scanty crops there, whilst the great prairies of miles and miles, with all their wealth and fertility, are lying untrodden and unknown in the heart of the untraversed continent. The most powerful telescope leaves *nebulae* unresolved, which, though they seem but a dim dust of light, are all ablaze with mighty suns. The 'goodness' which He has 'wrought before the sons of men for them that fear' Him is, as the Psalmist adoringly exclaims, wondrously 'great,' but still greater is that which the same verse of the Psalm celebrates—the goodness which He has 'laid up for them that fear Him.' The gold which is actually coined and passing from hand to hand, is but a fraction, a mere scale, as it were, off the surface of the great uncoined mass of bullion that lies stored in the vaults there. Christ is a great deal more than any man, or than all men, have yet found Him to be. 'Gather up the broken pieces'; and see that nothing of that infinite preciousness of His be lost by us.

II. Then there is another very simple lesson which I draw. This command suggests for us Christ's thrift (if I may use the word) in the employment of His miraculous power.

Surely they might have said: 'If thou canst multiply five loaves into all this abundance, why should we be trudging about, each with a basket on his back full of bread, when we have with us He whose word can make it for us at any moment?' Yes, but a law which characterises all the miraculous, in both the Old and the New Testament, and which broadly distinguishes Christ's miracles from all the false miracles of false religions is this, that the miraculous is pared down

to the smallest possible amount, that not one hairsbreadth beyond the necessity shall be done by miracle; that whatever men can do they shall do; that their work shall stop as late, and begin again as soon as possible. Thus, though Christ was going to raise Lazarus, men's hands had to roll away the stone; and when Christ had raised Lazarus, men's hands had to loose the napkins from his face. And though Christ was able to say to the daughter of Jairus, ‘*Talitha cumi!*’ (damsel, arise!) His next word was: ‘Give her something to eat.’ Where the miraculous was needed it was used, and not a hairsbreadth beyond absolute necessity did it extend.

And so here Christ multiplies the bread, and yet each of the Apostles has to take a basket, probably some kind of woven wicker-work article which they would carry for holding their little necessities in their peregrinations; each Apostle has to take his basket, and perhaps emptying it of some of his humble apparel, to fill it with these bits of bread; for Christ was not going to work miracles where men's thrift and prudence could be employed.

Nor does He do so now. We live by faith, and our dependence on Him can never be too absolute. Only laziness sometimes dresses itself in the garb and speaks with the tongue of faith, and pretends to be truthful when it is only slothful. ‘Why criest thou unto Me?’ said God to Moses, ‘speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.’ True faith sets us to work. It is not to be perverted into idle and false depending upon Him to work for us, when by the use of our own ten fingers and our own brains, guided and strengthened by His working in us, we can do the work that is set before us,

III. Still further, there is another lesson here. Not only does the injunction show us Christ's thrift in the employment of the supernatural, but it teaches us our duty of thrift and care in the use of the spiritual grace bestowed upon us.

These men had given to them this miraculously made bread; but they had to exercise ordinary thrift in the preservation of the supernatural gift. Christ has been given to you by the most stupendous miracle that ever was or can be wrought, and if you are Christian people, you have the Spirit of Christ given to you, to dwell in your hearts, to make you wise and fair, gentle and strong, and altogether Christlike. But you have to take care of these gifts. You have to exercise the common virtues of economy and thrift in your use of the divine gifts as in your use of the common things of daily life. You have to use wisely and not waste the Bread of God that came down from heaven, or that Bread of God will not feed you. You have to provide the basket in which to carry the unexhausted residue of the divine gift, or you may stand hungry in the very midst of plenty, and whilst within arm's length of you there is bread enough and to spare to feed the whole world.

The lesson of my text, which is most eminently brought out if we adopt the translation which I have referred to at the beginning of these remarks, is, then, just this: Christian men, be watchful stewards of that great gift of a living Christ, the food of your souls, that has been by miracle bestowed upon you. Such gathering together for future need of the unused residue of grace may be accomplished by three ways. First, there must be a diligent use of the grace given. See that you use to the very full, in the measure of

your present power of absorbing and your present need, the gift bestowed upon you. Be sure that you take in as much of Christ as you can contain before you begin to think of what to do with the overplus. If we are not careful to take what we can, and to use what we need, of Christ, there is little chance of our being faithful stewards of the surplus. The water in a mill-stream runs over the trough in great abundance when the wheel is not working, and one reason why so many Christians seem to have so much more given to them in Christ than they need is because they are doing no work to use up the gift.

A second essential to such stewardship is the careful guarding of the grace given from whatever would injure it. Let not worldliness, business, cares of the world, the sorrows of life, its joys, duties, anxieties or pleasures—let not these so come into your hearts that they will elbow Christ out of your hearts, and dull your appetite for the true Bread that came down from heaven.

And lastly, not only by use and by careful guarding, but also by earnest desire for larger gifts of the Christ who is large beyond all measure, shall we receive more and more of His sweetness and His preciousness into our hearts, and of His beauty and glory into our transfigured characters. The basket that we carry, this recipient heart of ours, is elastic. It can stretch to hold any amount that you like to put into it. The desire for more of Christ's grace will stretch its capacity, and as its capacity increases the inflowing gift greatens, and a larger Christ fills the larger room of my poor heart.

So the lesson is taught us of our prudence in the care and use of the grace bestowed on us, and we are

bidden to cherish a happy confidence in the inexhaustible resources of Christ, and the continual gift in the future of even larger measures of grace, which are all ours already, given to us at the first reception of Him into our hearts, and only needing our faithfulness to be growingly ours in experience as they are ours from the first in germ.

IV. Finally, a solemn warning is implied in this command, and its reason 'that nothing be lost.'

Then there is a possibility of losing the gift that is freely given to us. We may waste the bread, and so, sometime or other when we are hungry, awake to the consciousness that it has dropped out of our slack hands. The abundance of Christ's grace may, so far as you are profited or enriched by it, be like the unclaimed millions of money which nobody asks for and that is of use to no living soul. You may be paupers while all God's riches in glory are at your disposal, and starving while baskets full of bread broken for us by Christ lie unused at our sides. Some of us have never tasted the sweetness or been fed by the nutritiousness of that Bread of God which came down from heaven. And more marvellous still, there may be some of us, who having come to Christ hungry and been fed by Him, have ceased to care for the pure nourishment and taste for the manna, and are turning again with gross appetite to the husks in the swine's trough. Negligent Christians! worldly Christians! you who care more for money and other dainties and delights which perish with the using—backsliding Christians, who once hungered and thirsted for more of Christ, and now have no longing for Him—awake to the danger in which you stand of letting all your spiritual wealth slip through your fingers; behold the treasures,

yet unreachèd, within your grasp, and seek to garner and realise them. Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, lest everything be lost.

THE FIFTH MIRACLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

'So when they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. 20. But He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid.'—JOHN vi. 19, 20.

THERE are none of our Lord's parables recorded in this Gospel, but all the miracles which it narrates are parables. Moral and religious truth is communicated by the outward event, as in the parable it is communicated by the story. The mere visible fact becomes more than semi-transparent. The analogy between the spiritual and the natural world which men instinctively apprehend, of which the poet and the orator and the religious teacher have always made abundant use, and which it has sometimes been attempted, unsuccessfully as I think, to elevate to the rank of a scientific truth, underlies the whole series of these miracles. It is the principal if not the only key to the meaning of this one before us.

The symbolism which regards life under the guise of a voyage, and its troubles and difficulties under the metaphor of storm and tempest, is especially natural to nations that take kindly to the water, like us Englishmen. I do not know that there is any instance, either in the Old or in the New Testament, of the use of that to us very familiar metaphor; but the emblem of the sea as the symbol of trouble, unrest, rebellious power, is very familiar to the writers of the Old Testament. And the picture of the divine path as in the waters, and of the divine prerogative as being to 'tread

upon the heights of the sea,' as Job has it, is by no means unknown. So the natural symbolism, and the Old Testament use of the expressions, blend together, as I think, in suggesting the one point of view from which this miracle is to be regarded.

It is found in two of the other Evangelists, and the condensed account of it which we have in this Gospel, by its omission of Peter's walking on the water, and of some other smaller but graphic details that the other Evangelists give us, serves to sharpen the symbolical meaning of the whole story, and to bring that as its great purpose and signification into prominence.

We shall, I think, then, best gain the lessons intended to be drawn if we simply follow the points of the narrative in their order as they stand here.

I. We have here, first of all, then, the struggling toilers.

The other Evangelists tell us that after the feeding of the five thousand our Lord 'constrained' His disciples to get into the ship, and to pass over to the other side. The language implies unwillingness, to some extent, on their part, and the exercise of authority upon His. Our Evangelist, who does not mention the constraint, supplies us with the reason for it. The preceding miracle had worked up the excitement of the mob to a very dangerous point. Crowds are always the same, and this crowd thought, as any other crowd anywhere and in any age would have done, that the prophet that could make bread at will was the kind of prophet whom they wanted. So they determined to take Him by force, and make Him a king; and Christ, seeing the danger, and not desiring that His Kingdom should be furthered by such unclean hands and gross motives, determined to withdraw

Himself into the loneliness of the bordering hills. It was wise to divide the little group; it would distract attention; it might lead some of the people, as we know it did lead them, to follow the boat when they found it was gone. It would save the Apostles from being affected by the coarse, smoky enthusiasm of the crowd. It would save them from revealing the place of His retirement. It might enable Him to steal away more securely unobserved. So they are sent across to the other side of the lake, some five or six miles. An hour or two might have done it, but for some unknown reason they seem to have lingered. Perhaps they had no special call for haste. The Paschal moon, nearly full, would be shining down upon the waters; their hearts and minds would be busy with the miracle which they had just seen. And so they may have drifted along, not caring much when they reached their destination. But suddenly one of the gusts of wind which are frequently found upon mountain lakes, especially towards nightfall, rose and soon became a gale with which they could not battle. Our Evangelist does not tell us how long it lasted, but we get a note of time from St. Mark, who says it was 'about the fourth watch of the night'; that is between the hours of three and six in the morning of the subsequent day. So that for some seven or eight hours at least they had been tugging at the useless oars, or sitting shivering, wet and weary, in the boat.

Is it not the history of the Church in a nutshell? Is it not the symbol of life for us all? The solemn law under which we live demands persistent effort, and imposes continual antagonism upon us; there is no reason why we should regard that as evil, or think ourselves hardly used, because we are not fair-weather

sailors. The end of life is to make men; the meaning of all events is to mould character. Anything that makes me stronger is a blessing, anything that develops my *morale* is the highest good that can come to me. If therefore antagonism mould in me

‘The wrestling thews that throw the world,’

and give me good, strong muscles, and put tan and colour into my cheek, I need not mind the cold and the wet, nor care for the whistling of the wind in my face, nor the dash of the spray over the bows. Summer sailing in fair weather, amidst land-locked bays, in blue seas, and under calm skies, may be all very well for triflers, but

‘Blown seas and storming showers’

are better if the purpose of the voyage be to brace us and call out our powers.

And so be thankful if, when the boat is crossing the mouth of some glen that opens upon the lake, a sudden gust smites the sheets and sends you to the helm, and takes all your effort to keep you from sinking. Do not murmur, or think that God’s Providence is strange, because many and many a time when ‘it is dark, and Jesus is not yet come to us,’ the storm of wind comes down upon the lake and threatens to drive us from our course. Let us rather recognise Him as the Lord who, in love and kindness, sends all the different kinds of weather which, according to the old proverb, make up the full-summed year.

And then notice how, in this first picture of our text, the symbolism so naturally lends itself to spiritual meanings, not only in regard to the tempest that caught the unthinking voyagers, but also in regard to other points; such as the darkness amidst which they

had to fight the tempest, and the absence of the Master. Once before, they had been caught in a similar storm on the lake, but it was daylight then, and Jesus was with them, and that made all the difference. This time it was night, and they looked up in vain to the green Eastern hills, and wondered where in their folds He was lurking, so far from their help. Mark gives us one sweet touch when he tells us that Christ on the hillside there *saw* them toiling in rowing, but they did not see Him. No doubt they felt themselves deserted, and sent many a wistful glance of longing towards the shore where He was. Hard thoughts of Him may have been in some of their minds. 'Master, carest Thou not?' would be springing to some of their lips with more apparent reason than in the other storm on the lake. But His calm and loving gaze looked down pitying on all their fear and toil. The darkness did not hide from Him, nor His own security on the steadfast land make Him forget, nor his communion with the Father so absorb Him as to exclude thoughts of them.

It is a parable and a prophecy of the perpetual relation between the absent Lord and the toiling Church. He is on the mountain while we are on the sea. The stable eternity of the Heavens holds Him; we are tossed on the restless mutability of time, over which we toil at His command. He is there interceding for us. Whilst He prays He beholds, and He beholds that He may help us by His prayer. The solitary crew were not so solitary as they thought. That little dancing speck on the waters, which held so much blind love and so much fear and trouble, was in His sight, as on the calm mountain-top He communed with God. No wonder that weary hearts and lonely ones, groping

amidst the darkness, and fighting with the tempests and the sorrows of life, have ever found in our story a symbol that comes to them with a prophecy of hope and an assurance of help, and have rejoiced to know that they on the sea are beheld of the Christ in the sky, and that 'the darkness hideth not from' His loving eye.

II. And now turn to the next stage of the story before us. We have the approaching Christ.

'When they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs,' and so were just about the middle of the lake, 'they see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing nigh unto the ship.' They were about half-way across the lake. We do not know at what hour in the fourth watch the Master came. But probably it was towards daybreak. Toiling had endured for a night. It would be in accordance with the symbolism that joy and help should come with the morning.

If we look for a moment at the miraculous fact, apart from the symbolism, we have a revelation here of Christ as the Lord of the material universe, a kingdom wider in its range and profounder in its authority than that which that shouting crowd had sought to force upon Him. His will consolidated the yielding wave, or sustained His material body on the tossing surges. Whether we suppose the miracle as wrought on the one or the other, makes no difference to its value as a manifestation of the glory of Christ, and of His power over the physical order of things. In the latter case there would, perhaps, be a hint of a power residing in His material frame, of which we possibly have other phases, as in the Transfiguration, which may be a prophecy of what lordship over nature is possible to a sinless manhood. However that may be,

we have here a wonderful picture which is true for all ages of the mighty Christ, to whose gentle footfall the unquiet surges are as a marble pavement; and who draws near in the purposes of His love, unhindered by antagonism, and using even opposing forces as the path for His triumphant progress. Two lessons may be drawn from this. One is that in His marvellous providence Christ uses all the tumults and unrest, the opposition and tempests which surround the ship that bears His followers, as the means of achieving His purposes. We stand before a mystery to which we have no key when we think of these two certain facts; first, the Omnipotent redeeming will of God in Christ; and, second, the human antagonism which is able to rear itself against that. And we stand in the presence of another mystery, most blessed, and yet which we cannot unthread, when we think, as we most assuredly may, that in some mysterious fashion He works His purposes by the very antagonism to His purposes, making even head-winds fill the sails, and planting His foot on the white crests of the angry and changeful billows. How often in the world's history has this scene repeated itself, and by a divine irony the enemies have become the helpers of Christ's cause, and what they plotted for destruction has turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel! 'He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and with the residue thereof He girdeth Himself.'

Another lesson for our individual lives is this, that Christ, in His sweetness and His gentle sustaining help, comes near to us all across the sea of sorrow and trouble. A more tender, a more gracious sense of His nearness to us is ever granted to us in the time of our darkness and our grief than is possible to us in the

sunny hours of joy. It is always the stormy sea that Christ comes across, to draw near to us; and they who have never experienced the tempest have yet to learn the inmost sweetness of His presence. When it is night, and it is dark, at the hour which is the keystone of night's black arch, Christ comes to us, striding across the stormy waters. Sorrow brings *Him* near to *us*. Do you see that sorrow does not drive *you* away from Him!

III. Then, still further, we note in the story before us the terror and the recognition.

St. John does not tell us why they were afraid. There is no need to tell us. They see, possibly in the chill uncertain light of the grey dawn breaking over the Eastern hills, a Thing coming to them across the water there. They had fought gallantly with the storm, but this questionable shape freezes their heart's blood, and a cry, that is audible above even the howling of the wind and the dash of the waves, gives sign of the superstitious terror that crept round the hearts of those commonplace, rude men.

I do not dwell upon the fact that the average man, if he fancies that anything from out of the Unseen is near him, shrinks in fear. I do not ask you whether that is not a sign and indication of the deep conviction that lies in men's souls, of a discord between themselves and the unseen world; but I ask you if we do not often mistake the coming Master, and tremble before Him when we ought to be glad?

We are often so absorbed with our work, so busy tugging at the oar, so anxiously watching the set of current, so engaged in keeping the helm right, that we have no time and no eyes to look across the ocean and see who it is that is coming to us through all the

hurly-burly. Our tears fill our eyes, and weave a veil between us and the Master. And when we do see that there is Something there, we are often afraid of it, and shrink from it. And sometimes when a gentle whisper of consolation, or some light air, as it were, of consciousness of His presence, breathes through our souls, we think that it is only a phantasm of our own making, and that the coming Christ is nothing more than the play of our thoughts and imaginations.

Oh, brethren, let no absorption in cares and duties, let no unchildlike murmurings, let no selfish abandonment to sorrow, blind you to the Lord who always comes near troubled hearts, if they will only look and see! Let no reluctance to entertain religious ideas, no fear of contact with the Unseen, no shrinking from the thought of Christ as a *Kill-joy* keep you from seeing Him as He draws near to you in your troubles. And let no sly, mocking Mephistopheles of doubt, nor any poisonous air, blowing off the foul and stagnant marshes of present materialism, make you fancy that the living Reality, treading on the flood there, is a dream or a fancy or the projection of your own imagination on to the void of space. He is real, whatever may be phenomenal and surface. The storm is not so real as the Christ, the waves not so substantial as He who stands upon them. They will pass and quieten, He will abide for ever. Lift up your hearts and be glad, because the Lord comes to you across the waters, and hearken to His voice: 'It is I! Be not afraid.'

The encouragement not to fear follows the proclamation, 'It is I!' What a thrill of glad confidence must have poured itself into their hearts, when once they rose to the height of that wondrous fact!

‘Well roars the storm to those who hear
A deeper voice across the storm.’

There is no fear in the consciousness of His presence. It is His old word: ‘Be not afraid!’ And He breathes it whithersoever He comes; for His coming is the banishment of danger and the exorcism of dread. So that if only you and I, in the midst of all storm and terror, can say ‘It is the Lord,’ then we may catch up the grand triumphant chorus of the old psalm, and say: ‘Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, yet I will not fear.’ The Lord is with us; the everlasting Christ is our Helper, our Refuge, and our Strength.

IV. So, lastly, we have here in this story the end of the tempest and of the voyage.

Our Evangelist does not record, as the others do, that the storm ceased upon Christ’s being welcomed into the little boat. The other Evangelists do not record, as he does, the completion of the voyage. ‘Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.’ The two things are cause and effect. I do not suppose, as many do, that a subordinate miracle is to be seen in that last clause of our text, or that the ‘immediately’ is to be taken as if it meant that without one moment’s delay, or interval, the voyage was completed; but only, which I think is all that is needful, that the falling of the tempest and the calming of the waters which followed upon the Master’s entrance into the vessel made the remainder of the voyage comparatively brief and swift.

It is not always true, it is very seldom true, that when Christ comes on board opposition ends, and the haven is reached. But it is always true that when

Christ comes on board a new spirit enters into the men who have Him for their companion, and are conscious that they have. It makes their work easy, and makes them 'more than conquerors' over what yet remains. With what a different spirit the weary men would bend their backs to the oars once more when they had the Master on board, and with what a different spirit you and I will set ourselves to our work if we are sure of His presence. The worst of trouble is gone when Christ shares it with us. There is a wonderful charm to stay His rough wind in the assurance that in all our affliction He is afflicted. If we feel that we are following in His footsteps, we feel that He stands between us and the blast, a refuge from the storm and a covert from the tempest. And if still, as no doubt will be the case, we have our share of trouble and storm and sorrow and difficulty, yet the worst of the gale will be passed, and though a long swell may still heave, the terror and the danger will have gone with the night, and hope and courage and gladness revive as the morning's sun breaks over the still unquiet waves, and shows us our Master with us and the white walls of the port glinting in the level beams.

Friends, life is a voyage, anyhow, with plenty of storm and danger and difficulty and weariness and exposure and anxiety and dread and sorrow, for every soul of man. But if you will take Christ on board, it will be a very different thing from what it will be if you cross the wan waters alone. Without Him you will make shipwreck of yourselves; with Him your voyage may seem perilous and be tempestuous, but He will 'make the storm a calm,' and will bring you to the haven of your desire.

HOW TO WORK THE WORK OF GOD

'Then said they unto Him. What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'—JOHN vi. 28, 29.

THE feeding of the five thousand was the most 'popular' of Christ's miracles. The Evangelist tells us, with something between a smile and a sigh, that 'when the people saw *it*, they said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world,' and they were so delighted with Him and with it, that they wanted to get up an insurrection on the spot, and make a King of Him. I wonder if there are any of that sort of people left. If two men were to come into Manchester to-morrow morning, and one of them were to offer material good, and the other wisdom and peace of heart, which of them, do you think, would have the larger following? We need not cast a stone at the unblushing, frank admiration that these men had for a Prophet who could feed them, for that is exactly the sort of prophet that a great number of us would like best if they spoke out.

So Jesus Christ had to escape from the inconvenient enthusiasm of these mistaken admirers of His; and they followed Him in their eagerness, but were met with words which lift them into another region and damp their zeal. He tries to turn away their thoughts from the miracle to a far loftier gift. He contrasts the trouble which they willingly took in order to get a meal with their indifference as to obtaining the true bread from heaven, and He bids them work for it just as they had shown themselves ready to work for the other.

They put to Him this question of my text, so strangely blending as it does right and wrong, 'You have bid us work; tell us how to work? What must we do that we may work the works of God?' Christ answers, in words that illuminate their confusions and clear the whole matter, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

I. Faith, then, is a work.

You know that the commonplace of evangelical teaching opposes faith to works; and the opposition is perfectly correct, if it be rightly understood. But I have a strong impression that a great deal of our preaching goes clean over the heads of our hearers, because we take for granted, and they fancy that they understand, the meaning of terms because the terms themselves are so familiar. And I believe that many people go to churches and chapels all their lives long, and hear this doctrine dinned into them, that they are to be saved by faith, and not by works, and never approach a definite understanding of what it means.

So let me just for a moment try to clear up the terms of this apparently paradoxical statement that faith is a work. What do we mean by faith? What do you mean by saying that you have faith in your friend, in your wife, in your husband, in your guide? You simply mean, and we mean, that you trust the person, grasping him by the act of trust. On trust the whole fabric of human society depends, as well as in another aspect of the same expression does the whole fabric of Manchester commerce. Faith, confidence, the leaning of myself on one discerned to be true, trusty, strong, sufficient for the purpose in hand, whatever it may be—that, and nothing more mysterious, nothing further away from daily life and the common emotions which

knit us to one another, is, as I take it, what the New Testament means when it insists upon faith.

Ah, we all exercise it. You put it forth in certain low levels and directions. 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,' is the short summary of the happy lives of many, I have no doubt, of my present hearers. Have you none of that confidence to spare for God? Is it all meant to be poured out upon weak, fallible, changeful creatures like ourselves, and none of it to rise to the One in whom absolute confidence may eternally be fixed?

But then, of course, as we may see by the exercise of the same emotion in regard to one another, the under side (as I have been accustomed to say to you) of this confidence in God or Christ is diffidence of myself. There is no real exercise of confidence which does not involve, as an essential part of itself, the going out from myself in order that I may lay all the weight and the responsibility of the matter in hand upon Him in whom I trust. And so Christian faith is compounded of these two elements, or rather, it has these two sides which correspond to one another. The same figure is convex or concave according as you look at it from one side or another. If you look at faith from one side, it rises towards God; if from the other, it hollows itself out into a great emptiness. And so the under side of faith is distrust; and he that puts his confidence in God thereby goes out of himself, and declares that in himself there is nothing to rest upon.

Now that two-sided confidence and diffidence, trust and distrust, which are one, is truly a work. It is not an easy one either; it is the exercise of our own inmost nature. It is an effort of will. It has to be done by coercing ourselves. It has to be maintained in the

face of many temptations and difficulties. The contrast between faith and work is between an inward act and a crowd of outward performances. But the faith which knits me to God is my act, and I am responsible for it.

But yet it is not a work, just because it is a ceasing from my own works, and going out from myself that He may enter in. Only remember, when we say, 'Not by works of righteousness, but by the faith of Christ,' we are but proclaiming that the inward man must exercise that act of self-abnegation and confession of its own impotence, and ceasing from all reliance on anything which it does, whereby, and whereby alone, it can be knit to God. 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto eternal life. . . . This is the work of God, that ye believe.' You are responsible for doing that, or for not doing it.

II. Secondly, faith, and not a multitude of separate acts, is what pleases God.

Mark the difference between the form of the question and that of the answer. The people say, 'What are we to do that we may work the *works* of God?' Christ answers in the singular: 'This is the *work*.' They thought of a great variety of observances and deeds. He gathers them all up into one. They thought of a pile, and that the higher it rose the more likely they were to be accepted. He unified the requirement, and He brought it all down to this one act, in which all other acts are included, and on which alone the whole weight of a man's salvation is to rest. 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?' is a question asked in all sorts of ways, by the hearts of men all round about us; and what a babble of answers comes!

The priest says, 'Rites and ceremonies.' The thinker says, 'Culture, education.' The moralist says, 'Do this, that, and the other thing,' and enumerates a whole series of separate acts. Jesus Christ says, 'One thing is needful. . . . This is the work of God.' He brushes away the sacerdotal answer and the answer of the mere moralist, and He says, 'No! Not *do*; but *trust*.' In so far as that is act, it is the only act that you need.

That is evidently reasonable. The man is more than his work; motive is more important than action; character is deeper than conduct. God is pleased, not by what men do, but by what men are. We must *be* first, and then we shall *do*. And it is obviously reasonable, because we can find analogies to the requirement in all other relations of life. What would you care for a child that scrupulously obeyed, and did not love or trust? What would a prince think of a subject who was ostentatious in acts of loyalty, and all the while was plotting and nurturing treason in his heart?

If doing separate acts of righteousness be the way to work the works of God, then no man has ever done them. For it is a plain fact that every man falls below his own conscience — which conscience is less scrupulous than the divine law. The worst of us knows a great deal more than the best of us does; and our lives, universally, are, at the best, lives of partial effort after unreached attainments of obedience and of virtue.

But, even supposing that we could perform, far more completely than we do, the requirements of our own consciences, and conform to the evident duties of our position and relations, do you think that without faith we should be therein working the works of God?

Suppose a man were able fully to realise his own ideal of goodness, without any confidence in God underlying all his acts; do you think that these would be acts that would please God? It seems to me that, however lovely and worthy of admiration, looked at with human eyes only, many lives are, which have nobly and resolutely fought against evil, and struggled after good, if they have lacked the crowning grace of doing this for God's sake, they lack, I was going to say, almost everything; I will not say that, but I will say that they lack that which makes them acceptable, well-pleasing to Him. The poorest, the most imperfect realisation of our duty and ideal of conduct which has in it a love towards God and a faith in Him that would fain do better if it could, is a nobler thing, I venture to say, in the eyes of Heaven—which are the truth-seeing eyes—than the noblest achievements of an untrusting soul. It does not seem to me that to say so is bigotry or narrowness or anything else but the plain deduction from this, that a man's relation to God is the deepest thing about him, and that if that be right, other things will come right, and if that be wrong nothing is as right as it might be.

Here we have Jesus Christ laying the foundation for the doctrine which is often said to be Pauline, as if that meant something else than coming from Jesus Christ. We often hear people say, 'Oh, your evangelical teaching of justification by faith, and all that, comes out of Paul's Epistles, not out of Christ's teaching, nor out of John's Gospel.' Well, there is a difference, which it is blindness not to recognise, between the seeds of teaching in our Lord's words, and the flowers and fruit of these seeds, which we get in the more systematised and developed teaching of the Epistles. I

frankly admit that, and I should expect it, with my belief as to who Christ is, and who Paul is. But in that saying, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,' is the germ of everything that Paul has taught us about the works of the law being of no avail, and faith being alone and unfailing in its power of uniting men to God, and bringing them into the possession of eternal life. The saying stands in John's Gospel, and so Paul and John alike received, though in different fashions, and wrought out on different lines of subsequent teaching, the germinal impulse from these words of the Master. Let us hear no more about salvation by faith being a Pauline addition to Christ's Gospel, for the lips of Christ Himself have declared 'this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.'

III. Thirdly, this faith is the productive parent of all separate works of God.

The teaching that I have been trying to enforce has, I know, been so presented as to make a pillow for indolence, and to be closely allied to immorality. It has been so presented, but it has not been so presented half as often as its enemies would have us believe. For I know of but very few, and those by no means the most prominent and powerful of the preachers of the great doctrine of salvation by faith, who have not added, as its greatest teacher did: 'Let ours also be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses.' But the true teaching is not that trust is a substitute for work, but that it is the foundation of work. The Gospel is, first of all, Trust; then, Set yourselves to do the works of faith. It works by love, it is the opening of the heart to the entrance of the life of Christ, and, of course, when that life comes in, it will act in the man

in a manner appropriate to its origin and source, and he that by faith has been joined to Jesus Christ, and has opened his heart to receive into that heart the life of Christ, will, as a matter of course, bring forth, in the measure of his faith, the fruits of righteousness.

We are surely not despising fruits and flowers when we insist upon the root from which they shall come. A man may take separate acts of partial goodness, as you see children in the springtime sticking daisies on the spikes of a thorn-twigg picked from the hedges. But these will die. The basis of all righteousness is faith, and the manifestation of faith is practical righteousness. 'Show Me thy faith by thy works' is Christ's teaching quite as much as it is the teaching of His sturdy servant James. And so, dear friends, we are going the shortest way to enrich lives with all the beauties of possible human perfection when we say, 'Begin at the beginning. The longest way round is the shortest way home; trust Him with all your hearts first, and that will effloresce into "whatsoever things are lovely and whatever things are of good report."' In the beautiful metaphor of the Apostle Peter, in his second Epistle, Faith is the damsel who leads in the chorus of consequent graces; and we are exhorted to 'add to our faith virtue,' and all the others that unfold themselves in harmonious sequence from that one central source.

If I had time I should be glad to turn for a moment to the light which such considerations cast upon subjects that are largely occupying the attention of the Christian Church to-day. I should like to insist that, before you talk much about applied Christianity, you should be very sure that in men there *is* a Christianity to apply. I venture to profess my own humble belief that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, Christian

ministers and churches will do no more for the social, political, and intellectual and moral advancement of men and the elevation of the people by sticking to their own work and preaching this Gospel—‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.’

IV. Lastly, this faith secures the bread of life.

The bread of life is the starting-point of the whole conversation. In the widest possible sense it is whatsoever truly stills the hunger of the immortal soul. In a deeper sense it is the person of Jesus Christ Himself, for He not only says that He will *give*, but that He *is* the Bread of Life. And, in the deepest sense of all, it is His flesh broken for us in His sacrifice on the Cross. That bread is a gift. So the paradox results which stands in our text—*work* for the bread which God will *give*. If it be a gift, that fact determines what sort of work must be done in order to possess it. If it be a gift, then the only work is to accept it. If it be a gift, then we are out of the region of *quid pro quo*; and have not to bring, as Chinese do, great strings of copper cash that, all added up together, do not amount to a shilling, in order to buy what God will bestow upon us. If it be a gift, then to trust the Giver and to accept the gift is the only condition that is possible.

It is not a condition that God has invented and arbitrarily imposed. The necessity of it is lodged deep in the very nature of the case. Air cannot get to the lungs of a mouse in an air-pump. Light cannot come into a room where all the shutters are up and the keyhole stopped. If a man chooses to perch himself on some little stool of his own, with glass legs to it, and to take away his hand from the conductor,

no electricity will come to him. If I choose to lock my lips, Jesus Christ does not prise open my clenched teeth to put the bread of life into my unwilling mouth. If we ask, we get; if we take, we get.

And so the paradox comes, that we work for a gift, with a work which is not work because it is a departure from myself. It is the same blessed paradox which the prophet spoke when he said, 'Buy . . . without money and without price.' Oh! what a burden of hopeless effort and weary toil—like that of the man that had to roll the stone up the hill, which ever slipped back again—is lifted from our shoulders by such a word as this that I have been poorly trying to speak about now! 'Thou art careful and troubled about many things,' poor soul! trying to be good; trying to fight yourself, and the world, and the devil. Try the other plan, and listen to Him saying, 'Give up self-imposed effort in thine own strength. Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you.'

THE MANNA

'I am that bread of life. 49. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.'—JOHN vi. 48-50.

'THIS is of a truth that Prophet,' said the Jews, when Christ had fed the five thousand on the five barley loaves and the two small fishes. That was the kind of Teacher for them; they were quite unaffected by the wisdom of His words and the beauty of His deeds, but a miracle that found food precisely met their wants, and so there was excited an impure enthusiasm, very unwelcome to Jesus. Therefore He withdrew Himself from it, and when the people followed Him, all full of

expectation, to get some more loaves and see some more miracles, He met them with a douche of cold water that cooled their enthusiasm and flung them back into a critical, questioning mood. They pointed to the miracle of the manna, and hinted that, if He expected them to accept Him, He must do as Moses had done, or something like it. Probably there was a Jewish tradition in existence then to the effect that the Messiah was to repeat the miracle of the manna. But, at all events, Christ lays hold of the reference that they put into His hands, and He said in effect, 'Manna? Yes; I give, and am, the true Manna.'

So this is the third of the instances in this Gospel in which our Lord pointed to Old Testament incidents and institutions as symbolising Himself. In the first of them, when He likened Himself to the ladder that Jacob saw, He claimed to be the Medium of communication between heaven and earth. In the second of them, when He likened Himself to the brazen serpent lifted in the camp, He claimed to be the Healer of a sin-stricken and poisoned world. And now, with an allusion both to the miracle and to the Jewish demand for the repetition of the manna sign, He claims to be the true Food for a starving world. So there are three things in my text: Christ's claim, His requirements, and His promise; the bread, the eating, the issues.

I. Here is a claim of Christ's.

As I have already said, in the whole wonderful conversation of which I have selected a portion for my text, there is a double reference to the miracle of the loaves and of the manna. What our Lord means to assert for Himself is that which is common to both of these—viz. that He supplies the great primal wants of humanity, the hunger of the heart. There may be

another reference also, which I just notice without dwelling upon it. Barley loaves were the coarsest and least valuable form of bread. They were not only of little worth, but altogether inadequate to feeding the five thousand. The palates, unaccustomed to the stinging savours of the garlic and the leeks of Egypt, loathed the light bread. And so Jesus Christ comes into the world in lowly form, like the barley loaf or the light bread from which men whose tastes have been vitiated by the piquant savours of more earthly nourishment turn away as insipid. And yet He in His lowliness, He in His savourlessness, is that which meets the deepest wants of humanity, and is every man's fare because He will be any man's satisfaction.

But I wish to bring before your notice the wonderful way in which our Lord, in this great dissertation concerning Himself as the Bread of Life, gradually unfolds the depths of His meaning and of His offer. He began with saying that He, the Son of Man, will give to men the bread that 'endures to everlasting life.' And then when that saying is but dimly understood, and yet awakes some strange new desires and appetites in the hearers, and they come to Him and ask, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread,' He answers them with opening another finger of His hand, as it were, and showing them a little more of the treasure that lies in His palm. For He says, '*I am* that Bread of Life.' That is an advance on the previous saying. He gives bread, and any man that was conscious of possessing some great truth or some great blessing which, believed and accepted, would refresh and nourish humanity, might have said the same thing. But now we pass into the *penumbra* of a greater mystery: '*I am* that Bread of Life.' You cannot separate what Christ gives from

what Christ is. You can take the truths that another man proclaims, altogether irrespective of him and his personality. That only disturbs, and the sooner it is got rid of, the firmer and the purer our possession of the message for which he is only the medium. You can take Plato's teaching and do as you like with Plato. But you cannot take Christ's teaching and do as you like with Christ. His personality is the centre of His gift to the world. 'I am that Bread of Life.' That He should give it is much; that He should *be* it is far more.

And notice how, when He has thus drawn us a little further into the magic circle of the light, He not only asserts the inseparableness of His gift from His Person, but also asserts, with a reference, no doubt, to the manna, 'I am the Bread that came down from heaven.' The listeners immediately laid hold of that one point, and neglected for the moment all the rest, and they fixed with a true instinct—although it was for the purpose of contradicting it—on this central point, 'that came down from heaven.' They said one to the other, 'How can this man say that He came down from heaven? Is not this Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?' So, brethren, as the manna that descended from above in the dew of the night was to the bread that was baked in a baker's oven, so is the Christ to the manhood that has its origin in the natural processes of birth. The Incarnation of the Son of God, becoming Son of Man for us and for our salvation, is involved in this great claim. You do not get to the heart of Christ's message unless you have accepted this as the truth concerning Him, that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' and that at a definite point in

the long process of the ages, 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us.' He will never be 'the Bread of Life' unless He is 'the Bread that came down from heaven.' For humanity needs that the blue heavens that bend remote above should come down; and we cannot be lifted 'out of the horrible pit and the miry clay' unless a Hand from above be reached down into the depths of our degradation, and lift us from our lowness. Heaven must come to earth, if earth is to rise to heaven. The ladder must be let down from above, if ever from the lower levels men are to ascend thither where at the summit the face of God can be seen.

But that is not all. Our Lord, if I may recur to a former figure, went on to open another finger of His hand, and to show still more of the gift. For He not only said, 'the Son of Man gives the bread,' and 'I am the Bread that came down from heaven,' but He went on to say, in a subsequent stage of the conversation, 'the Bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Now, notice that '*will* give.' Then, though the Word was made flesh, and the manna came down from heaven, the especial gift of His flesh for the life of the world was, at the time of His speaking, a future thing. And what He meant is still more clearly brought out, when we read other words which are the very climax of this conversation, when He declares that the condition of our having life in ourselves is our 'eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man.' The figure is made repulsive on purpose, in order that it may provoke us to penetrate to its meaning. It was even more repulsive to the Jew, with his religious horror of touching or tasting anything in which the blood was. And yet

our Lord not only speaks of Himself as the Bread, but of His flesh and blood as being the Food of the world. The separation of the two clearly indicates a violent death, and I, for my part, have no manner of doubt that, in these great words in which our Lord lays bare the deepest foundations of His claim to be the Food of humanity, there is couched, in the veiled language which was necessary at the then stage of His mission, a distinct reference to His death, as being the Sacrifice on which a hunger-stricken world may feed and be satisfied.

So here we have, in three steps, the great central truth of the Gospel set forth in symbolical aspect: the Son that gives, the Son that is, the Bread of the world, and the death whereby His flesh and blood are separated and become the nourishment of all sin-stricken souls. I do not say one word to enforce these claims, but I beseech you deal fairly with these Gospel narratives, and do not go on picking out of them bits of Christ's actions or words, which commend themselves to you, and ignoring all the rest. There is no more reason to believe that Jesus Christ ever said, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them likewise,' or any other part of that Sermon on the Mount which some people take as their Christianity, than there is to believe that He said, 'The bread which I give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Believe it or not, it is not dealing with the Scripture records as you deal with other historical records if, for subjective reasons, you brush aside all that department of our Lord's teaching. And if you do accept it, what becomes of His 'sweet reasonableness'? What becomes of His meekness and lowliness of heart? I was going to say what becomes

of His sanity, that He should stand up, a youngish man from Nazareth, in the synagogue of Capernaum, and should say, 'I, heaven-descended, and slain by men, am the Bread of Life to the whole world'?

I was going to make another observation, which I must just pass with the slightest notice, and that is that, taking this point of view and giving full weight to these three stages of our Lord's progressive revelation of Himself, we have the answer to the question, What is the connection between these discourses and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? Our modern sacramentarian friends will have it that Jesus Christ is speaking of the Communion in this chapter. I take it, and I venture to think it the reasonable explanation, that He is not speaking about the Communion, but that this discourse and that rite are dealing with the same truths—the one in articulate words, the other in equivalent symbols. And so we have not to read into the text any allusion to the rite, but to see in the text and in the rite the proclamation of the same thing—viz. that the flesh and the blood of the Sacrifice for sins is the food on which a sinful and cleansed world may feed.

II. So, secondly, let me ask you to note our Lord's requirement here.

He carries on the metaphor. 'This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.' The eating necessarily follows from the symbol of the bread, as the designation of the way by which we all, with our hungry hearts, may feed upon this Bread of God. I need not remind you that in many a place, and in this whole context, we find the explanation of the symbol very plainly. In another part of this conversation we read, under another

metaphor which comes to the same thing, 'He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.' So the eating and the coming are diverse symbols for the one thing, the believing. When a man eats he appropriates to himself, and incorporates into his very being, the food of which he partakes. And when a man trusts Christ he appropriates to himself, and incorporates into his inmost being, the very life of Jesus Christ. You say, 'That is mysticism'; but it is the New Testament teaching, that when I trust Christ I get more than His gifts—I get Himself; that when my faith goes out to Him it not only rests me on Him, but it brings Him into me, and that food of the spirit becomes the life, as we shall see, of *my* spirit.

That condition is indispensable. It is useless to have food on your table or your plate or in your hand, it does not nourish you there: you must eat it, and then you gain sustenance from it. Many a hungry man has died at the door of a granary. Some of us are starving, though beside us there is 'the Bread of God that came down from heaven.' Brethren, you must eat, and I venture to put the question to you—*not* Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the world's Saviour? *not* Do you believe in an Incarnation? *not* Do you believe in an Atonement? but Have you claimed your portion in the Bread? Have you taken it into your own lips? *Crede et manducasti*, said Augustine, 'believe'—or, rather, *trust*—'and thou hast eaten.' Have *you*?

Further, let me remind you that under this eating is included not only some initial act of faith, but a continuous course of partaking. The dinner you ate this

day last year is of no use for to-day's hunger. The act of faith done long ago will not bring the Bread to nourish you now. You must repeat the meal. And very strikingly and beautifully in the last part of this conversation our Lord varies the word for eating, and substitutes—as if He were speaking to those who had fulfilled the previous condition—another one which implies the ruminant action of certain animals. And that is what Christian men have to do, to feed over and over and over again on the 'Bread of God which came down from heaven.' Christ, and especially in and through His death for us, can nourish and sustain our wills, giving them the pattern of what they should desire, and the motive for which they should desire it. Christ, and especially through His death, can feed our consciences, and take away from them all the painful sense of guilt, while He sharpens them to a far keener sensitiveness to evil. Christ, and especially through His death, can feed our understandings, and unveil therein the deepest truths concerning God and man, concerning man's destiny and God's mercy. Christ, and especially in His death, can feed our affections, and minister to love and desire and submission and hope their celestial nourishment. He is 'the Bread of God,' and we have but to eat of that which is laid before us.

III. So, lastly, we have here the issues.

'Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.' This Bread secures that if 'a man eat thereof he shall not die.' The bread that perishes feeds a life that perishes; but this Bread not only sustains but creates a life that cannot perish, and, taken into the spirits of men that are 'dead in trespasses and sins,'

imparts to them a life that has no affinity to evil, and therefore no dread of extinction.

If 'a man eats thereof he shall not die.' Christ annihilates for us the mere accident of physical death. That is only a momentary jolt on the course. That may all be crammed into a parenthesis. 'He shall not die,' but live the true life which comes from the possession of union with Him who is the Life. The bread which we eat sustains life; the Bread which He gives originates it. The bread which we eat is assimilated to our bodily frame, the Bread which He gives assimilates our spiritual nature to His. And so it comes to be the only food that stills a hungry heart, the only food that satisfies and yet never cloy, which, eating, we are filled, and being filled are made capable of more, and, being capable of more, receive more. In blessed and eternal alternation, fruition and desire, satisfaction and appetite, go on.

'Why do ye spend money for that which is not bread?' You cannot answer the question with any reasonable answer. Oh, dear friends! I beseech you listen to that Lord who is saying to each of us, 'Take, eat, this is My body, which is broken for you.'

ONE SAYING WITH TWO MEANINGS

'Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me. 34. Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.'—JOHN vii. 33, 34.

'Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.'—JOHN xiii. 33.

No greater contrast can be conceived than that between these two groups to whom such singularly similar words were addressed. The one consists of the officers, tools of the Pharisees and of the priests, who had been sent to seize Christ, and would fain have carried out their masters' commission, but were restrained by a strange awe, inexplicable even to themselves. The other consists of the little company of His faithful, though slow, scholars, who made a great many mistakes, and sometimes all but tired out even His patience, and yet were forgiven much because they loved much. Hatred animated one group, loving sorrow the other.

Christ speaks to them both in nearly the same words, but with what a different tone, meaning, and application! To the officers the saying is an exhibition of His triumphant confidence that their malice is impotent and their arms paralysed; that when He wills He will go, not be dragged by them or any man, but go to a safe asylum, where foes can neither find nor follow. The officers do not understand what He means. They think that, bad Jew as they have always believed Him to be, He may very possibly consummate His apostasy by going over to the Gentiles altogether; but, at any rate, they feel that He is to escape their hands.

The disciples understand little more as to whither

He goes, as they themselves confess a moment after; but they gather from His words His loving pity, and though the upper side of the saying seems to be menacing and full of separation, there is an under side that suggests the possibility of a reunion for them.

The words are nearly the same in both cases, but they are not absolutely identical. There are significant omissions and additions in the second form of them. 'Little children' is the tenderest of all the names that ever came from Christ's lips to His disciples, and never was heard on His lips except on this one occasion, for parting words ought to be very loving words. 'A little while I am with you,' but He does not say, 'And then I go to Him that sent Me.' 'Ye shall seek Me,' but He does not say, 'And shall not find Me.' 'As I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you,' that little word 'now' makes the announcement a truth for the present only. His disciples shall not seek Him in vain, but when they seek they shall find. And though for a moment they be parted from Him, it is with the prospect and the confidence of reunion. Let us, then, look at the two main thoughts here. First, the two 'seekings,' the seeking which is vain, and the seeking which is never vain; and the two 'cannots,' the inability of His enemies for evermore to come where He is, and the inability of His friends, for a little season, to come where He is.

I. The two seekings.

As I have observed, there is a very significant omission in one of the forms of the words. The enemies are told that they will never find Him, but no such dark words are spoken to the friends. So, then, hostile seeking of the Christ is in vain, and loving seeking of Him by His friends, though they understand Him but very

poorly, and therefore seek Him that they may know Him better, is always answered and over-answered.

Let me deal just for a moment or two with each of these. In their simplest use the words of my first text merely mean this: 'You cannot touch Me, I am passing into a safe asylum where your hands can never reach Me.'

We may generalise that for a moment, though it does not lie directly in our path, and preach the old blessed truth that no man with hostile intent seeking for Christ in His person, in His Gospel, or in His followers and friends, can ever find Him. All the antagonism that has stormed against Him and His cause and words, and His followers and lovers, has been impotent and vain. The pursuers are like dogs chasing a bird, sniffing along the ground after their prey, which all the while sits out of their reach on a bough, and carols to the sky. As in the days of His flesh, His foes could not touch His person till He chose, and vainly sought Him when it pleased Him to hide from them, so ever since, in regard to His cause, and in regard to all hearts that love Him, no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper. They shall be wrapped, when need be, in a cloud of protecting darkness, and stand safe within its shelter. Take good cheer, all you that are trying to do anything, however little, however secular it may appear to be, for the good and well-being of your fellows! All such service is a prolongation of Christ's work, and an effluence from His, if there be any good in it at all; and it is immortal and safe, as is His. 'Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me.'

But then, besides that, there is another thought. It is not merely hostile seeking of Him that is hopeless

and vain. When the dark days came over Israel, under the growing pressure of the Roman yoke, and amidst the agonies of that last siege, and the unutterable sufferings which all but annihilated the nation, do you not think that there were many of these people who said to themselves: 'Ah! if we had only that Jesus of Nazareth back with us for a day or two; if we had only listened to Him!' Do you not think that before Israel dissolved in blood there were many of those who had stood hostile or alienated, who desired to see 'one of the days of the Son of Man,' and did not see it? They sought Him, not in anger any more; they sought Him, not in penitence, or else they would have found Him; but they sought Him simply in distress, and wishing that they could have back again what they had cared so little for when they had it.

And are there no people listening to me now, to whom these words apply?—

'He that will not, when he may,
When he will it shall be—Nay!'

Although it is (blessed be His name) always true that a seeking heart finds Him, and whensoever there is the faintest trace of penitent desire to get hold of Christ's hand it does grasp ours, it is also true that things neglected once cannot be brought back; that the sowing time allowed to pass can never return; and that they who have turned, as some of you have turned, dear friends, all your lives, a deaf ear to the Christ that asks you to love Him and trust Him, may one day wish that it had been otherwise, and go to look for Him and not find Him.

There is another kind of seeking that is vain, an intellectual seeking without the preparation of the

heart. There are, no doubt, some people here to-day that would say, 'We have been seeking the truth about religion all our lives, and we have not got to it yet.' Well, I do not want to judge either your motives or your methods, but I know this, that there is many a man who goes on the quest for religious certainty, and looks *at*, if not *for* Jesus Christ, and is not really capable of discerning Him when he sees Him, because his eye is not single, or because his heart is full of worldliness or indifference, or because he begins with a foregone conclusion, and looks for facts to establish that; or because he will not cast down and put away evil things that rise up between him and his Master.

My brother! if you go to look for Jesus Christ with a heart full of the world, if you go to look for Him while you wish to hold on by all the habitudes and earthlinesses of your past, you will never find Him. The sensualist seeks for Him, the covetous man seeks for Him, the passionate, ill-tempered man seeks for Him; the woman plunged in frivolities, or steeped to the eyebrows in domestic cares,—these may in some feeble fashion go to look for Him and they will not find Him, because they have sought for Him with hearts overcharged with other things and filled with the affairs of this life, its trifles and its sins.

I turn for a moment to the seeking that is not vain. 'Ye shall seek Me' is not on Christ's lips to any heart that loves Him, however imperfectly, a sentence of separation or an appointment of a sorrowful lot, but it is a blessed law, the law of the Christian life.

That life is all one great seeking after Christ. Love seeks the absent when removed from our sight. If we care anything about Him at all, our hearts will turn to Him as naturally as, when the winter begins to

pinch, the migrating birds seek the sunny south, impelled by an instinct that they do not themselves understand.

The same law which sends loving thoughts out across the globe to seek for husband, child, or friend when absent, sets the really Christian heart seeking for the Christ, whom, having not seen, it loves, as surely as the ivy tendril feels out for a support. As surely as the roots of a mountain-ash growing on the top of a boulder feel down the side of the rock till they reach the soil; as surely as the stork follows the warmth to the sunny Mediterranean, so surely, if your heart loves Christ, will the very heart and motive of your action be the search for Him.

And if you do *not* seek Him, brother, as surely as He is parted from our sense you will lose Him, and He will be parted from you wholly, for there is no way by which a person who is not before our eyes may be kept near us except only by diligent effort on our part to keep thought and love and will all in contact with Him; thought meditating, love going out towards Him, will submitting. Unless there be this effort, you will lose your Master as surely as a little child in a crowd will lose his nurse and his guide, if his hand slips from out the protecting hand. The dark shadow of the earth on which you stand will slowly steal over His silvery brightness, as when the moon is eclipsed, and you will not know how you have lost Him, but only be sadly aware that your heaven is darkened. ‘Ye shall seek Me,’ is the condition of all happy communion between Christ and us.

And that seeking, dear brother, in the threefold form in which I have spoken of it—effort to keep Him in our thoughts, in our love, and over our will—is

neither a seeking which starts from a sense that we do not possess Him, nor one which ends in disappointment. But we seek for Him because we already have Him in a measure, and we seek Him that we may possess Him more abundantly, and anything is possible rather than that such a search shall be vain. Men may go to created wells, and find no water, and return ashamed, and with their vessels empty, but every one who seeks for that Fountain of salvation shall draw from it with joy. It is as impossible that a heart which desires Jesus Christ shall not have Him, as it is that lungs dilated shall not fill with air, or as it is that an empty vessel put out in a rainfall shall not be replenished. He does not hide Himself, but He desires to be found. May I say that as a mother will sometimes pretend to her child to hide, that the child's delight may be the greater in searching and in finding, so Christ has gone away from our sight in order, for one reason, that He may stimulate our desires to feel after Him! If we seek Him hid in God, we shall find Him for the joy of our hearts.

A great thinker once said that he would rather have the search after truth than the possession of truth. It was a rash word, but it pointed to the fact that there is a search which is only one shade less blessed than the possession. And if that be so in regard to any pure and high truth, it is still more so about Christ Himself. To seek for Him is joy; to find Him is joy. What can be a happier life than the life of constant pursuit after an infinitely precious object, which is ever being sought and ever being found; sought with a profound consciousness of its preciousness, found with a widening appreciation and capacity for its enjoyment? 'Ye shall seek Me' is a word not of evil but of good cheer;

for buried in the depth of the commandment to search is the promise that we shall find.

II. Secondly, let us look briefly at these two 'cannots.'

'Whither I go, ye cannot come,' says He to His enemies, with no limitation, with no condition. The 'cannot' is absolute and permanent, so long as they retain their enmity. To His friends, on the other hand, He says, 'So *now* I say to you,' the law for to-day, the law for this side the flood, but not the law for the beyond, as He explains more fully in the subsequent words: 'Thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.'

So, then, Christ is *somewhere*. When He passed from life it was not into a state only, but into a place; and He took with Him a material body, howsoever changed. He is somewhere, and there friend and enemy alike cannot enter, so long as they are compassed with 'the earthly house of this tabernacle.' But the incapacity is deeper than that. No sinful man can pass thither. Where has He gone? The preceding words give us the answer. 'God shall glorify Him in Himself.' The prospect of that assumption into the inmost glory of the divine nature directly led our Lord to think of the change it would bring about in the relation of His humble friends to Him. While for Himself He triumphs in the prospect, He cannot but turn a thought to their lonesomeness, and hence come the words of our text. He has passed into the bosom and blaze of divinity. Can I walk there, can I pass into that tremendous fiery furnace? 'Who shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?' 'Ye cannot follow Me now.' No man can go thither except Christ goes thither.

There are deep mysteries lying in that word of our Lord's,—'I go to prepare a place for you.' We know

not what manner of activity on His part that definitely means. It seems as if somehow or other the presence in Heaven of our Brother in His glorified humanity was necessary in order that the golden pavement should be trodden by our feet, and that our poor, feeble manhood should live and not be shrivelled up in the blaze of that central brightness.

We know not how He prepares the place, but heaven, whatever it be, is no place for a man unless the Man, Christ Jesus, be there. He is the Revealer of God, not only for earth, but for heaven; not only for time, but for eternity. 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me,' is true everywhere and always, there as here. So I suppose that, but for His presence, heaven itself would be dark, and its King invisible, and if a man could enter there he would either be blasted with unbearable flashes of brightness or grope at its noon-day as the blind, because his eye was not adapted to such beams. Be that as it may, 'the Forerunner is for us entered.' He has gone before, because He knows the great City, 'His own calm home, His habitation from eternity.' He has gone before to make ready a lodging for us, in whose land He has dwelt so long, and He will meet us, who would else be bewildered like some dweller in a desert if brought to the capital, when we reach the gates, and guide our unaccustomed steps to the mansion prepared for us.

But the power to enter there, even when He is there, depends on our union with Christ by faith. When we are joined to Him, the absolute 'cannot,' based upon flesh, and still more upon sin, which is a radical and permanent impossibility, is changed into a relative and temporary incapacity. If we have faith in Christ, and are thereby drawing a kindred life from Him, our

nature will be in process of being changed into that which is capable of bearing the brilliance of the felicities of heaven. But just as these friends of Christ, though they loved Him very truly, and understood Him a little, were a long way from being ready to follow Him, and needed the schooling of the Cross, and Olivet, and Pentecost, as well as the discipline of life and toil, before they were fully ripe for the harvest, so we, for the most part, have to pass through analogous training before we are prepared for the place which Christ has prepared for us. Certainly, so soon as a heart has trusted Christ, it is capable of entering where He is, and the real reason why the disciples could not come where He went was that they did not yet clearly know Him as the divine Sacrifice for theirs and the world's sins, and, however much they believed in Him as Messiah, had not yet, nor could have, the knowledge on which they could found their trust in Him as their Saviour.

But, while that is true, it is also true that each advance in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour will bring with it capacity to advance further into the heart of the far-off land, and to see more of the King in His beauty. So, as long as His friends were wrapped in such dark clouds of misconception and error, as long as their Christian characters were so imperfect and incomplete as they were at the time of my text being spoken, they could not go thither and follow Him. But it was a diminishing impossibility, and day by day they approximated more and more to His likeness, because they understood Him more, and trusted Him more, and loved Him more, and grew towards Him, and, therefore, day by day became more and more able to enter into that Kingdom.

Are you growing in power so to do? Is the only thing which unfits you for heaven the fact that you have a mortal body? In other respects are you fit to go into that heaven, and walk in its brightness and not be consumed? The answer to the question is found in another one—Are you joined to Jesus Christ by simple faith? The incapacity is absolute and eternal if the enmity is eternal.

State and place are determined yonder by character, and character is determined by faith. Take a bottle of some solution in which heterogeneous substances have all been melted up together, and let it stand on a shelf and gradually settle down, and its contents will settle in regular layers, the heaviest at the bottom and the lightest at the top, and stratify themselves according to gravity. And that is how the other world is arranged—stratified. When all the confusions of this present are at an end, and all the moisture is driven off, men and women will be left in layers, like drawing to like. As Peter said about Judas with equal wisdom and reticence, 'He went to his own place.' That is where we shall all go, to the place we are fit for.

God does not slam the door of heaven in anybody's face; it stands wide open. But there is a mystic barrier, unseen, but most real, more repellent than cherub and flaming sword, which makes it impossible for any foot to cross that threshold except the foot of the man whose heart and nature have been made Christlike, and fitted for heaven by simple faith in Him.

Love Him and trust Him, and then your life on earth will be a blessed seeking and a blessed finding of Him whom to seek is joyous effort, whom to find is an Elysium of rest. You will walk here not parted from

Him, but with your thoughts and your love, which are your truest self, going up where He is, until you drop 'the muddy vesture of decay' which unfits you whilst you wear it for the presence-chamber of the King, and so you will enter in and be 'for ever with the Lord.'

THE ROCK AND THE WATER

'In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. 38. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'—JOHN vii. 37, 38.

THE occasion and date of this great saying are carefully given by the Evangelist, because they throw much light on its significance and importance. It was 'on the last day, that great day of the Feast,' that 'Jesus stood and cried.' The Feast was that of Tabernacles, which was instituted in order to keep in mind the incidents of the desert wandering. On the anniversary of this day the Jews still do as they used to, and in many a foul ghetto and frowsy back street of European cities, you will find them sitting beneath the booths of green branches, commemorating the Exodus and its wonders. Part of that ceremonial was that on each morning of the seven, and possibly on the eighth, 'the last day of the Feast,' a procession of white-robed priests wound down the rocky footpath from the Temple to Siloam, and there in a golden vase drew water from the spring, chanting, as they ascended and re-entered the Temple gates where they poured out the water as a libation, the words of the prophet, 'with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'

Picture the scene to yourselves—the white-robed priests toiling up the pathway, the crowd in the court,

the sparkling water poured out with choral song. And then, as the priests stood with their empty vases, there was a little stir in the crowd, and a Man who had been standing watching, lifted up a loud voice and cried, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto *Me*, and drink.' Strange words to say, anywhere and anywhen, daring words to say there in the Temple court! For there and then they could mean nothing less than Christ's laying His hand on that old miracle, which was pointed to by the rite, when the rock yielded the water, and asserting that all which it did and typified was repeated, fulfilled, and transcended in Himself, and that not for a handful of nomads in the wilderness, but for all the world, in all its generations.

So here is one more instance to add to those to which I have directed your attention on former occasions, in which, in this Gospel, we find Christ claiming to be the fulfilment of incidents and events in that ancient covenant, Jacob's ladder, the brazen serpent, the manna, and now the rock that yielded the water. He says of them all that they are the shadow, and the substance is in Him.

I. So then, we have to look, first, at Christ's view of humanity as set forth here.

You remember the story of how the people in the wilderness, distressed by that most imperative of all physical cravings, thirst, turned upon Moses and Aaron and said, 'Why have ye brought us here to die in the wilderness, where there are neither vines nor pomegranates,' but a land of thirst and death? Just as Christ, in the former instances to which we have already referred, selected and pointed to the poisoned and serpent-stricken camp as an emblem of humanity, and just as He pointed to the hunger of

the men that were starving there, as an emblem, so here He says: 'That is the world—a congregation of thirsty men raging in their pangs, and not knowing where to find solace or slaking for their thirst.' I do not need to go over all the dominant desires that surge up in men's souls, the mind craving for knowledge, the heart calling out for love, the whole nature feeling blindly and often desperately after something external to itself, which it can grasp, and in which it can feel satisfied. You know them; we all know them. Like some plant growing in a cellar, and with feeble and blanched tendrils feeling towards the light which is so far away, every man carries about within himself a whole host of longing desires, which need to find something round which they may twine, and in which they can be at rest.

'The misery of man is great upon him,' because, having these desires, he misreads so many of them, and stifles, ignores, atrophies to so large an extent the noblest of them. I know of no sadder tragedy than the way in which we misinterpret the meaning of these inarticulate cries that rise from the depths of our hearts, and misunderstand what it is that we are groping after, when we put out empty, and, alas! too often unclean, hands, to lay hold on our true good.

Brethren, you do not know what you want, many of you, and there is something pathetic in the endless effort to fill up the heart by a multitude of diverse and small things, when all the while the deepest meaning of aspirations, yearnings, longings, unrest, discontent is, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.' Nothing less than infinitude will satisfy the smallest heart of the humblest and least developed man. Nothing less than to have all our treasures in

one accessible, changeless Infinity will ever give rest to a human soul. You have tried a multiplicity of trifles. It takes a great many bags of coppers to make up £1000, and they are cumbrous to carry. Would it not be better to part with a multitude of goodly pearls, if need be, in order to have all your wealth, and the satisfaction of all your desires, in the 'One Pearl of great price'? It is God for whom men are thirsting, and, alas! so many of us know it not. As the old prophet says, in words that never lose their pathetic power, 'they have hewn out for themselves cisterns'—one is not enough—they need many. They are only cisterns, which hold what is put into them, and they are 'broken cisterns,' which cannot hold it. Yet we turn to these with a strange infatuation, which even the experience that teaches fools does not teach us to be folly. We turn *to* these; and we turn *from* the Fountain; the one, the springing, the sufficient, the unfailing, the exuberant Fountain of living waters. Some of you have cisterns on the tops of your houses, with a coating of green scum and soot on them, and do you like that foul draught better than the bright blessing that comes out of the heart of the rock, flashing and pure?

But not only are these desires misread, but the noblest of them are stifled. I have said that the condition of humanity is that of thirst. Christ speaks in my text as if that thirst was by no means universal, and, alas! it is not, '*If any man thirst*'; there are some of us that do not, for we are all so constituted that, unless by continual self-discipline, and self-suppression, and self-evolution, the lower desires will overgrow the loftier ones, and kill them, as weeds will some precious crop. And some of you are so much

taken up with gratifying the lowest necessities and longings of your nature, that you leave the highest all uncared for, and the effect of that is that the unsatisfied longing avenges itself, for your neglect of it, by infusing unrest and dissatisfaction into what else would satisfy the lowest. 'He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase,' but he that loves God will be satisfied with less than silver, and will continue satisfied when decrease comes. If you would suck the last drop of sweetness out of the luscious purple grapes that grow on earth, you must have the appetite after the best things, recognised, and ministered to, and satisfied. And when we are satisfied with God, we shall 'have learnt in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be self-sufficing.' But, as I say, the highest desires are neglected, and the lowest are cockered and pampered, and so the taste is depraved. Many of you have no wish for God, and no desire after high and noble things, and are perfectly contented to browse on the low levels, or to feed on 'the husks that the swine do eat,' whilst all the while the loftiest of your powers is starving within. Brethren, before we can come to the Rock that yields the water, there must be the sense of need. Do you know what it is that you want? Have you any desire after righteousness and purity and nobleness, and the vision of God flaming in upon the pettinesses and commonplaces of this life which is 'sound and fury, signifying nothing,' and is trivial in all its pretended greatness, unless you have learned that you need God most of all, and will never be at rest till you have Him?

II. Secondly, note here Christ's consciousness of Himself.

Is there anything in human utterances more majestic and wonderful than this saying of my text, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me'? There He claims to be separate altogether from those whose thirst He would satisfy. There He claims to be able to meet every aspiration, every spiritual want, every true desire in this complex nature of ours. There He claims to be able to do this for one, and therefore for all. There He claims to be able to do it for all the generations of mankind, right away down to the end. Who is He who thus plants Himself in the front of the race, knows their deep thirsts, takes account of the impotence of anything created to satisfy them, assumes the divine prerogative, and says, 'I come to satisfy every desire in every soul, to the end of time'? Yes, and from that day when He stood in the Temple and cried these words, down to this day, there have been, and there are, millions who can say, 'We have drawn water from this fountain of salvation, and it has never failed us.' Christ's audacious presentation of Himself to the world as adequate to fill all its needs, and slake all its thirst, has been verified by nineteen centuries of experience, and there are many men and women all over the world to-day who would be ready to set to their seals that Christ is true, and that He, indeed, is all-sufficient for the soul.

Brethren, I do not wish to dwell upon this aspect of our Lord's character in more than a sentence, but I beseech you to ask yourselves what is the impression that is left of the character of a man who says such things, unless He was something more than one of our race? Jesus Christ, it is as clear as day, in these words makes a claim which only divinity can warrant Him in making, or can fulfil when it is made. And I would

urge you to consider what the alternative is, if you do not believe that Jesus Christ here sets Himself forth as the Incarnate Word of God, sufficient for all humanity. 'I am meek and lowly in heart'—and His lowliness of heart is proved in a strange fashion, if He stands up before the race and says, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.'

III. Note, further, Christ's invitation.

'Let him come . . . and drink'—two expressions for one thing. That invitation sounds all through Scripture, and, perhaps, there was lingering in our Lord's mind, besides the reference to the rock that yielded the water, some echo of the words of the second Isaiah: 'Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.' 'Nay!' said Christ, 'not to the waters, but to Me.' And then we hear from His own lips the same invitation addressed to the woman of Samaria, with the difference that to her, an alien, He pointed only to the natural water in the well that had been Jacob's, whereas, to these people, the descendants of the chosen race, He pointed to the miracle in the desert, and claimed to fulfil that. And on the very last page of Scripture, as it is now arranged, there stands the echo again of this saying of my text, 'Let him that is athirst come'—there must be the sense of need, as I was saying, before there is the coming—'and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.'

Now, dear friends, beneath these two metaphorical expressions there lies one simple condition. I put it into three words, which, for the sake of being easily remembered, I cast into an alliterative form: approach Christ, appropriate Christ, adhere to Christ.

Approach Christ. You come by faith, you come by

love, you come by communion. And you can come if you will, though He is now on the throne.

Appropriate Christ. It is vain that the water should be gushing from the rock there, unless you make it your own by drinking. It must pass your lips. It must become your personal possession. You must enclose a piece of the common, and make it your very own. 'He loved *us*, and gave Himself for *us*'; well and good, but strike out the '*us*' and put in '*me*.' 'He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*.' The river may be flowing right past your door, yet your lips may be cracked with thirst, even whilst you hear the tinkle of its music amongst the sedges and the pebbles. Appropriate Christ. 'Come . . . and drink.'

Adhere to Christ. You were thirsty yesterday: you drank. That will not slake to-day's thirst, nor prevent its recurrence. And you must keep on drinking if you are to keep from perishing of thirst. Day by day, drop by drop, draught by draught, you must drink. According to the ancient Jewish legend, which Paul in one of his letters refers to, about this very miracle, you must have the Rock following you all through your desert pilgrimage, and you must drink daily and hourly, by continual faith, love, and communion.

IV. We have here not only these points, but a fourth. Christ's promise.

'He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' That is one case of the universal law that a man who trusts Christ becomes like the Christ whom he trusts. Derivatively and by impartation, no doubt, but still the man who has gone to that Rock, to the springing fountain as it rushes forth, receives into himself an inward life by the communi-

cation of Christ's divine Spirit, so that he has in him a fountain 'springing up into life everlasting.' The Book of Proverbs says, 'The good man shall be satisfied from himself,' but the good man is only satisfied from himself when he can say, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' and from that better self he will be satisfied.

So we may have a well in the courtyard, and may be able to bear in ourselves the fountain of water, and where the divine life of Christ by His Spirit has through faith been implanted within us, it will come out from us. There is a question for you Christian people—do any rivers of living water flow out of you? If they do not, it is to be doubted whether you have drunk of the fountain. There are many professing Christians who are like the foul little rivers that pass under the pavements in Manchester, all impure, and covered over so that nobody sees them. 'Out of him shall flow rivers of living water'—that is Christ's way of communicating the blessing of eternal life to the world—by the medium of those who have already received it. Christian men and women, if your faith has brought the life into you, see to it that approaching Christ, and appropriating Christ, and adhering to Christ, you are becoming assimilated to Christ, and in your daily life, God's grace fructifying through you to all, are 'become as rivers of water in a dry place, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.'

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

'... I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'—JOHN viii. 12.

JESUS CHRIST was His own great theme. Whatever be the explanation of the fact, there stands the fact that, if we know anything at all about His habitual tone of teaching, we know that it was full of Himself. We know, too, that what He said about Himself was very unlike the language becoming a wise and humble religious teacher. Both the prominence given to His own personality, and the tremendous claims He advances for Himself, are hard to reconcile with any conception of His nature and work except one,—that there we see God manifest in the flesh. Are such words as these fit to be spoken by any man conscious of his own limitations and imperfections of life and knowledge? Would they not be fatal to any one's pretensions to be a teacher of religion or morality? They assert that the Speaker is the Source of illumination for the world; the only Source; the Source for all. They assert that 'following' Him, whether in belief or in deed, is the sure deliverance from all darkness, either of error or of sin; and implants in every follower a light which is life. And the world, instead of turning away from such monstrous assumptions, and drowning them in scornful laughter, or rebelling against them, has listened, and largely believed, and has not felt them to mar the beauty of meekness, which, by a strange anomaly, this Man says that He has.

Words parallel to these are frequent on our Lord's lips. In each instance they have some special appropriateness of application, as is probably the case here.

The suggestion has been reasonably made, that there is an allusion in them to part of the ceremonial connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, at which we find our Lord present in the previous chapter. Commentators tell us that on the first evening of the Feast, two huge golden lamps, which stood one on each side of the altar of burnt offering in the Temple court, were lighted as the night began to fall, and poured out a brilliant flood over Temple and city and deep gorge; while far into the midnight, troops of rejoicing worshippers clustered about them with dance and song. The possibility of this reference is strengthened by the note of place which our Evangelist gives. 'These things spake Jesus in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple,' for the 'treasury' stood in the same court, and doubtless the golden lamps were full in sight of the listening groups. It is also strengthened by the unmistakable allusion in the previous chapter to another portion of the ceremonial of the Feast, where our Lord puts forth another of His great self-revelations and demands, in singular parallelism with that of our text, in the words, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.' That refers to the custom during the Feast of drawing water from the fountain of Siloam, which was poured out on the altar, while the gathered multitude chanted the old strain of Isaiah's prophecy: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.' It is to be remembered, too, in estimating the probability of our text belonging to these Temple-sayings at the Feast, that the section which separates it from them, and contains the story about the woman taken in adultery, is judged by the best critics to be out of place here, and is not found in the most valuable manuscripts. If, then, we suppose this allusion to be fairly probable, I

think it gives a special direction and meaning to these grand words, which it may be worth while to think of briefly.

The first thing to notice is—the intention of the ceremonial to which our Lord here points as a symbol of Himself. What was the meaning of these great lights that went flashing through the warm autumn nights of the festival? All the parts of that Feast were intended to recall some feature of the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness; the lights by the altar were memorials of the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When, then, Jesus says, 'I am the Light of the world,' He would declare Himself as being in reality, and to every soul of man to the end of time, what that cloud with its heart of fire was in outward seeming to one generation of desert wanderers.

Now, the main thing which *it* was to these, was the visible vehicle of the divine presence. 'The Lord went before them in a pillar of a cloud.' 'The Lord looked through the pillar.' 'The Lord came down in the cloud and spake with him.' The 'cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared.' Such is the way in which it is ever spoken of, as being the manifestation to Israel in sensible form of the presence among them of God their King. 'The glory of the Lord' has a very specific meaning in the Old Testament. It usually signifies that brightness, the flaming heart of the cloudy pillar, which for the most part, as it would appear, veiled by the cloud, gathered radiance as the world grew darker at set of sun, and sometimes, at great crises in the history, as at the Red Sea, or on Sinai, or in loving communion with the law-giver, or in swift judgment against the rebels, rent the veil and flamed on men's eyes. I need not remind you how this same

pillar of cloud and fire, which at once manifested and hid God, was thereby no unworthy symbol of Him who remains, after all revelation, unrevealed. Whatsoever sets forth, must also shroud, the infinite glory. Concerning all by which He makes Himself known to eye, or mind, or heart, it must be said, 'And there was the hiding of His power.' The fire is ever folded in the cloud. Nay, at bottom, the light which is full of glory is therefore inaccessible, and the thick darkness in which He dwells is but the 'glorious privacy' of perfect light.

That guiding pillar, which moved before the moving people—a cloud to shelter from the scorching heat, a fire to cheer in the blackness of night—spread itself above the sanctuary of the wilderness; and 'the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.' When the moving Tabernacle gave place to the fixed Temple, again '*the* cloud filled the house of the Lord'; and there—dwelling between the cherubim, the types of the whole order of creatural life, and above the mercy-seat, that spoke of pardon, and the ark that held the law, and behind the veil, in the thick darkness of the holy of holies, where no feet trod, save once a year one white-robed priest, in the garb of a penitent, and bearing the blood that made atonement—shone the light of the glory of God, the visible majesty of the present Deity.

But long centuries had passed since that light had departed. 'The glory' had ceased from the house that now stood on Zion, and the light from between the cherubim. Shall we not, then, see a deep meaning and reference to that awful blank, when Jesus standing there in the courts of that Temple, whose inmost shrine was, in a most sad sense, empty, pointed to the quenched lamps that commemorated a departed Shechinah, and said, 'I am the Light of the world'?

He is the Light of the world, because in Him is the glory of God. His words are madness, and something very like blasphemy, unless they are vindicated by the visible indwelling in Him of the present God. The cloud of the humanity, 'the veil, that is to say, His flesh,' enfolds and tempers; and through its transparent folds reveals, even while it swathes, the Godhead. Like some fleecy vapour flitting across the sun, and irradiated by its light, it enables our weak eyes to see light, and not darkness, in the else intolerable blaze. Yes! Thou art the Light of the world, because in Thee dwelleth 'the fulness of the Godhead bodily.' Thy servant hath taught us the meaning of Thy words, when he said: 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Then, subordinate to this principal thought, is the other on which I may touch for a moment—that Christ, like that pillar of cloud and fire, *guides* us in our pilgrimage. You may remember how emphatically the Book of Numbers (chap. ix.) dwells upon the absolute control of all the marches and halts by the movements of the cloud. When it was taken up, they journeyed; when it settled down, they encamped. As long as it lay spread above the Tabernacle, there they stayed. Impatient eyes might look, and impatient spirits chafe—no matter. The camp might be pitched in a desolate place, away from wells and palm-trees, away from shade, among fiery serpents, and open to fierce foes—no matter. As long as the pillar was motionless, no man stirred. Weary slow days might pass in this compulsory inactivity; but 'whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the Tabernacle,

the children of Israel journeyed not.' And whenever it lifted itself up,—no matter how short had been the halt, how weary and footsore the people, how pleasant the resting-place—up with the tent-pegs immediately, and away. If the signal were given at midnight, when all but the watchers slept, or at midday, it was all the same. There was the true Commander of their march. It was not Moses, nor Jethro, with his quick Arab eye and knowledge of the ground, that guided them; but that stately, solemn pillar, that floated before them. How they must have watched for the gathering up of its folds as they lay softly stretched along the Tabernacle roof; and for its sinking down, and spreading itself out, like a misty hand of blessing, as it sailed in the van!

'I am the Light of the world.' We have in Him a better guide through worse perplexities than theirs. By His Spirit within us, by that all-sufficient and perfect example of His life, by the word of His Gospel, and by the manifold indications of His providence, Jesus Christ is our Guide. If ever we go astray, it is not His fault, but ours. How gentle and loving that guidance is, none who have not yielded to it can tell. How wise and sure, none but those who have followed it know. He does not say 'Go,' but 'Come.' When He puts forth His sheep, He goes before them. In all rough places His quick hand is put out to save us. In danger He lashes us to Himself, as Alpine guides do when there is perilous ice to get across. As one of the psalms puts it, with wonderful beauty: 'I will guide thee with Mine eye'—a glance, not a blow—a look of directing love, that at once heartens to duty and tells duty. We must be very near Him to catch that look, and very much in sympathy with Him to understand

it; and when we do, we must be swift to obey. Our eyes must be ever toward the Lord, or we shall often be marching on, unwitting that the pillar has spread itself for rest, or idly dawdling in our tents long after the cloud has gathered itself up for the march. Do not let impatience lead you to hasty interpretation of His plans before they are fairly evolved. Many men by self-will, by rashness, by precipitate hurry in drawing conclusions about what they ought to do, have ruined their lives. Take care, in the old-fashioned phrase, of 'running before you are sent.' There should always be a good clear space between the guiding ark and you, 'about two thousand cubits by measure,' that there may be no mistakes about the road. It is neither reverent nor wise to be treading on the heels of our Guide in our eager confidence that we know where He wants us to go.

Do not let the warmth by the camp-fire, or the pleasantness of the shady place where your tent is pitched, keep you there when the cloud lifts. Be ready for change, be ready for continuance, because you are in fellowship with your Leader and Commander; and let Him say, Go, and you go; Do this, and you gladly do it, until the hour when He will whisper, Come; and, as you come, the river will part, and the journey will be over, and 'the fiery, cloudy pillar,' that 'guided you all your journey through,' will spread itself out an abiding glory, in that higher home where 'the Lamb is the light thereof.'

All true following of Christ begins with faith, or we might almost say that following *is* faith, for we find our Lord substituting the former expression for the latter in another passage of this Gospel parallel with the present. 'I am come a Light into the world, that

whosoever believeth on Me should not walk in darkness.' The two ideas are not equivalent, but faith is the condition of following; and following is the outcome and test, because it is the operation, of faith. None but they who trust Him will follow Him. He who does not follow, does not trust. To follow Christ, means to long and strive after His companionship; as the Psalmist says, 'My soul followeth hard after Thee.' It means the submission of the will, the effort of the whole nature, the daily conflict to reproduce His example, the resolute adoption of His command as my law, His providence as my will, His fellowship as my joy. And the root and beginning of all such following is in coming to Him, conscious of mine own darkness, and trustful in His great light. We must rely on a Guide before we accept His directions; and it is absurd to pretend that we trust Him, if we do not go as He bids us. So 'Follow thou Me' is, in a very real sense, the sum of all Christian duty.

That thought opens out very wide fields, into which we must not even glance now; but I cannot help pausing here to repeat the remark already made, as to the gigantic and incomprehensible self-confidence that speaks here. 'Followeth *Me*'; then Jesus Christ calmly proposes Himself as the aim and goal for every soul of man; sets up His own doings as an all-sufficient rule for us all, with all our varieties of temper, character, culture, and work, and quietly assumes to have a right of precedence before, and of absolute command over, the whole world. They are all to keep *behind* Him, He thinks, be they saints or sages, kings or beggars; and the liker they are to Himself, He thinks, the nearer they will be to perfectness and life. He puts Himself at the head of the mystic march of the generations,

and, like the mysterious Angel that Joshua saw in the plain by Jericho, makes the lofty claim: 'Nay, but as *Captain* of the Lord's host am I come up.' Do we admit His claim because we know His Name? do we yield Him full trust because we have learned that He is the Light of men since He is the Word of God? Do we follow Him with loyal obedience, longing love, and lowly imitation, since He has been and is to us the Saviour of our souls?

In the measure in which we do, the great promises of this wonderful saying will be verified and understood by us—'He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness.' That saying has, as one may say, a lower and a higher fulfilment. In the lower, it refers to practical life and its perplexities. Nobody who has not tried it would believe how many difficulties are cleared out of a man's road by the simple act of trying to follow Christ. No doubt there will still remain obscurities enough as to what we ought to do, to call for the best exercise of patient wisdom; but an enormous proportion of them vanish like mist when the sun breaks through, when once we honestly set ourselves to find out whither the pillared Light is guiding. It is a reluctant will, and intrusive likings and dislikings, that obscure the way for us, much oftener than real obscurity in the way itself. It is seldom impossible to discern the divine will, when we only wish to know it that we may do it. And if ever it is impossible for us, surely that impossibility is like the cloud resting on the Tabernacle—a sign that for the present His will is that we should be still, and wait, and watch.

But there is a higher meaning in the words than even this promise of practical direction. In the profound symbolism of Scripture, especially of this Gospel,

'darkness' is the name for the whole condition of the soul averted from God. So our Lord here is declaring that to follow Him is the true deliverance from that midnight of the soul. There are a darkness of ignorance, a darkness of impurity, a darkness of sorrow; and in that threefold gloom, thickening to a darkness of death, are they enwrapt who follow not the Light. That is the grim, tragical side of this saying, too sad, too awful for our lips to speak much of, and best left in the solemn impressiveness of that one word. But the hopeful, blessed side of it is, that the feeblest beginnings of trust in Jesus Christ, and the first tottering steps that try to tread in His, bring us into the light. It does not need that we have reached our goal, it is enough that our faces are turned to it, and our hearts desire to attain it, then we may be sure that the dominion of the darkness over us is broken. To follow, though it be afar off, and with unequal steps, fills our path with increasing brightness, and even though evil and ignorance and sorrow may thrust their blackness in upon our day, they are melting in the growing glory, and already we may give thanks 'unto the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.'

But we have not merely the promise that we shall be led by the light and brought into the light. A yet deeper and grander gift is offered here: 'He shall have the light of life.' I suppose that means, not, as it is often carelessly taken to mean, a light which illuminates the life, but, like the similar phrases of this Gospel, 'bread of life,' 'water of life,'—light which is life. 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of

men.' These two are one in their source, which is Jesus, the Word of God. Of Him we have to say, 'With Thee is the fountain of life, in Thy light shall we see light.' They are one in their deepest nature; the life is the light, and the light the life. And this one gift is bestowed upon every soul that follows Christ. Not only will our outward lives be illumined or guided from without, but our inward being will be filled with the brightness. 'Ye were sometimes darkness, now are ye light in the Lord.'

That pillar of fire remained apart and without. But this true and better Guide of our souls enters in and dwells in us, in all the fulness of His triple gift of life, and light, and love. Within us He will chiefly prove Himself the Guide of our spirits, and will not merely cast His beams on the path of our feet, but will fill and flood us with His own brightness. All light of knowledge, of goodness, of gladness will be ours, if Christ be ours; and ours He surely will be if we follow Him. Let us take heed, lest turning away from Him we follow the will-o'-the-wisps of our own fancies, or the dancing lights, born of putrescence, that flicker above the swamps, for they will lead us into doleful lands where evil things haunt, and into outer darkness. Let us take heed how we use that light of God; for Christ, like His symbol of old, has a double aspect according to the eye which looks. 'It came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel, and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.' He is either a Stone of stumbling or a sure Foundation, a savour of life or of death, and which He is depends on ourselves. Trusted, loved, followed, He is light. Neglected, turned from, He is darkness. Though He be the Light of the world, it is only the man

who follows Him to whom He can give the light of life. Therefore, man's awful prerogative of perverting the best into the worst forced Him, who came to be the light of men, to that sad and solemn utterance: 'For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

THREE ASPECTS OF FAITH

'Many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him . . . '—JOHN viii. 30, 31.

THE Revised Version accurately represents the original by varying the expression in these two clauses, retaining 'believed on Him' in the former, and substituting the simple 'believed Him' in the latter. The variation in two contiguous clauses can scarcely be accidental in so careful a writer as the Apostle John. And the reason and meaning of it are obvious enough on the face of the narrative. His purpose is to distinguish between more and less perfect acceptance of Jesus Christ. The more perfect is the former, 'they believed on Him'; the less perfect is the latter, the simple acceptance of His word on His claim of Messiahship, which is stigmatised as shallow, and proved to be transient by the context.

They were 'Jews' which believed, and they continued to be so whilst they were believing. Now, the word 'Jew' in this Gospel always connotes antagonism to Jesus Christ; and as for these persons, how slight and unreliable their adhesion to the Lord is, comes out in the course of the next few verses; and by the end of the chapter they are taking up stones to stone Him.

So John would show us that there is a kind of acceptance which may be real, and may be the basis of something much better hereafter, but which, if it does not grow, rots and disappears; and he would draw a broad line of distinction between that and the other mental act, far deeper, more wholesome, more lasting and vital, which he designates as 'believing on Him.' I take these words, then, for consideration, not so much to deal with other thoughts suggested by them, as because they afford me a starting-point for the consideration of the various phases of the act of believing, its blessings and its nature, and its relation to its objects, which are expressed in the New Testament by the various grammatical connections and constructions of this word.

Now, the facts with which I wish to deal may be very briefly stated. There are three ways in which the New Testament represents the act of believing, and its relation to its Object, Christ. These three are, first, the simple one which appears in the text as 'believed Him.' Then there is a second, which appears in two forms, slightly different, but which, for our purpose, may be treated as substantially the same—'believing on Him.' And then there is a third, which, literally and accurately translated is, 'believing unto' or 'into Him.' That phrase is John's favourite one, and rather unfortunately, though perhaps necessarily, it has been generally rendered by our translators by the less forcible 'believing in,' which gives the idea of repose in, but does not give the idea of motion towards. These three, then, I think, do set forth, if we will ponder them, very large lessons as to the essence of this act of believing, as to the Object upon which it fastens, and as to the blessings which flow from it, which it will

be worth our while to consider now. I may cast the whole into the shape of three exhortations: believe Him, believe on Him, believe unto Him.

I. First, then, believe Christ.

We accept a man's words when we trust the man. Even if belief, or faith, is represented in the New Testament, as it very rarely is, as having for its object the words of revelation, behind that acceptance of the words lies confidence in the person speaking. And the beginning of all true Christian faith has in it, not merely the intellectual acceptance of certain propositions as true, but a confidence in the veracity of Him by whom they are made known to us—even Jesus Christ our Lord.

I do not need to insist upon that at any length here—it would take me away from my present purpose; but what I do wish to emphasise is, that from the very starting-point, the smallest germ of the most rudimentary and imperfect faith which knits a soul to Jesus Christ has Him for its Object, and is thus distinguished from the mere acceptance of truths which, on other grounds than the authority of the speaker, may legitimately commend themselves to a man.

Then believe Him. Now, that breaks up into two thoughts, which are all that I intend to deduce from it now, although many more might be suggested. The one is this, that the least and the lowest that Jesus Christ asks from us is the entire and unhesitating acceptance of His utterances as final, conclusive, and absolutely true. Whatever more Jesus Christ may be, He is, by His life and words, the Communicator of divine and certain truth. He is a Teacher, though He is a great deal more. And whatever more Christian

faith may be—and it is a great deal more—it requires, at least, the frank and full recognition of the authority of every word that comes from His lips. A Christianity without a creed is a dream. Bones without flesh are very dry, no doubt; but what about flesh without bones? An inert, shapeless mass. You will never have a vigorous and true Christian life if it is to be moulded according to the fantastic dream of these latter days, which tells us that we may take Jesus as the Guide of our conduct and need not mind about what He says to us. ‘Believe Me’ is His requirement. The words of His mouth, and the revelations which He has made in the sweetness of His life, and in all the graciousness of His dealings, are the very unveiling to man of absolute and final and certain truth.

But then, on the other hand, let us remember that, while all this is most clear and distinct in the teaching of Scripture, it carries us but a very short way. We find, in the instance from which we take our starting-point in this sermon, the broad distinction drawn, and practically illustrated in the conduct of the persons concerned, between the simple acceptance of what Christ says, and a true faith that clings to Him for evermore. And the same kind of disparagement of the lower process of merely accepting His word is found more than once in connection with the same phrases. We find, for instance, the two which are connected in our texts used in a previous conversation between our Lord and His antagonists. When He says to them, ‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,’ they reply, dragging down His claim to a lower level, ‘What sign showest Thou, that we may see, and believe Thee?’ He demanded belief *on* Himself; they answer, ‘We are ready

to *believe you*, on condition that we see something that may make the rendering of our belief a logical necessity for us.'

Let us lay to heart the rudimentary and incomplete character of a faith which simply accepts the teaching of Jesus Christ, and does no more. The notion that orthodoxy is Christianity, that a man who does not contradict the teaching of the New Testament is thereby a Christian, is a very old and very perilous and very widespread one. There are many of us who have no better claim to be called Christians than this, that we never denied anything that Jesus Christ said, though we are not sufficiently interested in it, I was going to say, even to deny it. This rudimentary faith, which contents itself with the acceptance of the truth revealed, hardens into mere formalism, or liquefies into mere careless indifference as to the very truth that it professes to believe. There is nothing more impotent than creeds which lie dormant in our brains, and have no influence upon our lives. I wonder how many readers of this sermon, who fancy themselves good Christians, do with their creed as the Japanese used to do with their Emperor—keep him in a palace behind bamboo screens, and never let him do anything, whilst all the reality of power was possessed by another man, who did not profess to be a king at all. Do you think you are Christians because you would sign thirty-nine or three hundred and ninety articles of Christianity, if they were offered to you, while there is not one of them that influences either your thinking or your conduct? Do not let us have these 'sluggish kings,' with a mayor of the place to do the real government, but set on the throne of your hearts the principles of your religion, and see to it that all your convictions be

translated into practice, and all your practice be informed by your convictions.

This belief in a set of dogmas, on the authority of Jesus Christ, about which dogmas we do not care a rush, and which make no difference upon our lives, is the faith about which James has so many hard things to say; and he ventures upon a parallel that I should not like to venture on unless I were made bold by his example: 'Thou believest, O vain man! thou doest well: the devils also believe, and'—better than you, in that their belief does something for them, they 'believe—and *tremble*.' But what shall we say about a man who professes himself a disciple, and neither trembles, nor thrills, nor hopes, nor dreads, nor desires, nor does any single thing because of his creed? Believe Jesus, but do not stop there.

II. Believe on Christ.

Now, as I have remarked already, and as many of you know, there is a slightly different, twofold form of this phrase in Scripture. I need not trouble you with the minute distinction between the one and the other. Both forms coincide in the important point on which I wish to touch. That representation of believing *on* Christ carries us away at once from the mere act of acceptance of His word on His authority to the far more manifestly voluntary, moral, and personal act of reliance upon Him. The metaphor is expanded in various ways in Scripture, and instead of offering any thoughts of my own about it, I would simply ask attention to three of the forms in which it is set forth in the Old and in the New Testaments.

The first of them, and the one which we may regard as governing the others, is that found in the words of Isaiah, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a sure

Foundation'; and, as the Apostle Peter comments, 'He that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.' There the thoughts presented are the superposition of the building upon its Foundation, the rest of the soul, and the rearing of the life on the basis of Jesus Christ.

How much that metaphor says to us about Him as the Foundation, in all the aspects in which we can apply that term! He is the Basis of our hope, the Guarantee of our security, the Foundation-stone of our beliefs, the very Ground on which our whole life reposes, the Source of our tranquillity, the Pledge of our peace. All that I think, feel, desire, wish, and do, ought to be rested upon that dear Lord, and builded on Him by simple faith. By patient persistence of effort rearing up the fabric of my life firmly upon Him, and grafting every stone of it—if I might so use the metaphor—into the bedding-stone, which is Christ, I shall be strong, peaceful, and pure.

The storm comes, the waters rise, the winds howl, the hail and the rain 'sweep away the refuge of lies,' and the dwellers in these frail and foundationless houses are hurrying in wild confusion from one peak to another, before the steadily rising tide. But he that builds on that Foundation 'shall not make haste,' as Isaiah has it; shall not need to hurry to shift his quarters before the flood overtake him; shall look out serene upon all the hurtling fury of the wild storm, and the rise of the sullen waters. So, reliance on Christ, and the honest making of Him the Basis, not of our hopes only, but of our thinkings and of our doings, and of our whole being, is the secret of security, and the pledge of peace.

Then there is another form of the same phrase, 'believing on,' in which is suggested not so much the figure

of building upon a foundation, as of some feeble man resting upon a strong stay, or clinging to an outstretched and mighty arm. The same metaphor is implied in the word 'reliance.' We lean upon Christ when, forsaking all other props, and realising His sufficiency and sweetness, we rest the whole weight of our weariness and all the impotence of our weakness upon His strong and unwearied arm, and so are saved. All other stays are like that one to which the prophet compares the King of Egypt—the papyrus reed in the Nile stream, on which, if a man leans, it will break into splinters which will go into his flesh, and make a poisoned wound. But if we lean on Christ, we lean on a brazen wall and an iron pillar, and anything is possible sooner than that that stay shall give.

There is still another form of the metaphor, in which neither building upon a foundation, nor leaning upon a support which is thought of as below what rests upon it, are suggested, but rather the hanging upon something firm and secure which is above what hangs from it. The same picture is suggested by our word 'dependence.' 'As a nail fastened in a sure place,' said one of the prophets, 'on Him shall hang all the glory of His Father's house.'

'Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.'

The rope lowered over the cliffs supports the adventurous bird-nester in safety above the murmuring sea. They who clasp Christ's hand outstretched from above, may swing over the deepest, most vacuous abyss, and fear no fall.

So, brother, build on Christ, rely on Him, depend on Him, and it shall not be in vain. But if you will not

build on the sure Foundation, do not wonder if the rotten one gives way. If you will not lean on the strong Stay, complain not when the weak one crumbles to dust beneath your weight. And if you choose to swing over the profound depth at the end of a piece of pack-thread, instead of holding on by an adamant chain wrapped round God's throne, you must be prepared for its breaking and your being smashed to pieces below.

III. The last exhortation that comes out of this comparative study of these phrases is—Believe into Christ.

That is a very pregnant and remarkable expression, and it can scarcely, as you see, be rendered into our language without a certain harshness; but still it is worth while to face the harshness for the sake of getting the double signification that is involved in it. For when we speak of believing unto or into Him, we suggest two things, both of which, apparently, were in the minds of the writers of the New Testament. One is motion towards, and the other is repose in, that dear Lord.

So, then, true Christian faith is the flight of the soul towards Christ. Therein is one of the special blessednesses of the Christian life, that it has for its object and aim absolutely infinite and unattainable completeness and glory, so that unwearied freshness, inexhaustible buoyancy, endless progress, are the dower of every spirit that truly trusts in Christ. All other aims and objects are limited, transient, and will be left behind. Every other landmark will sink beneath the horizon, where so many of our landmarks have sunk already, and where they will all disappear when the last moment comes. But we may have, and

if we are Christian people we shall have, bright before us, sufficiently certain of being reached to make our efforts hopeful and confident, sufficiently certain of never being reached to make our efforts blessed with endless aspirations, the great light and love of that dear Lord, to yearn after whom is better than to possess all besides, and following hard after whom, even in the very motion there is rest, and in the search there is finding. Religion is the flight of the soul, the aspiration of the whole man after the unattainable Attainable—‘that I may know Him, and be found in Him.’

Oh, how such thoughts ought to shame us who call ourselves Christians! Growth, progress, getting nearer to Christ, yearning ever with a great desire after Him!—do not the words seem irony when applied to most of us? Think of the average type of sluggish contentment with present attainments that marks Christian people—tortoises in their crawling rather than eagles in their flight. And let us take our portion of shame, and remember that the faith which believes Him, and that which believes on Him, both need to be crowned and perfected by that which believes towards Him, of which the motto is, ‘Forgetting the things that are behind, I reach forward to the things that are before.’

But there is another side to this last phase of faith. That true believing towards or unto Christ is the rest of the soul in Him. By faith that deep and most real union of the believing soul with Jesus Christ is effected which may be fitly described as our entrance into and abode in Him. The believer is as if incorporated into Him in whom he believes. Indeed, the Apostle ventures to use a more startling expression than *incorporation* when he says that ‘he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.’ If by faith we press

towards, by faith we shall be in, Christ. Faith is at once motion and rest, search and finding, desire and fruition. The felicity of this last form of the phrase is its expression of both these ideas, which are united in fact as in word. A rare construction of the verb *to believe*, with the simple preposition *in*, coincides with this part of the meaning of *believing unto* or *into*, and need not be separately considered.

With this understanding of its meaning, we see how natural is John's preference for this construction. For surely, if he has anything to tell us, it is that the true Christian life is a life enclosed, as it were, in Jesus Christ. Nor need I remind you how Paul, though he starts from a different point of view, yet coincides with John in this teaching. For, to him, to be 'in Christ' is the sum of all blessedness, righteousness, peace, and power. As in an atmosphere, we may dwell in Him. He may be the strong Habitation to which we may continually resort. One of the Old Testament words for trusting means taking refuge, and such a thought is naturally suggested by this New Testament form of expression. 'I flee unto Thee to hide me.' In that Fortress we dwell secure.

To be in Jesus, wedded to Him by the conjunction of will and desire, wedded to Him in the oneness of a believing spirit and in the obedience of a life, to be thus in Christ is the crown and climax of faith, and the condition of all perfection. To be in Christ is life; to be out of Him is death. In Him we have redemption; in Him we have wisdom, truth, peace, righteousness, hope, confidence. To be in Him is to be in heaven. We enter by faith. Faith is not the acceptance merely of His Word, but is the reliance of the soul on Him, the flight of the soul towards Him,

the dwelling of the soul in Him. 'Come, My people, into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee . . . until the indignation be overpast.'

'NEVER IN BONDAGE'

'We . . . were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?'—JOHN viii. 33.

'NEVER in bondage to any man'? Then what about Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Syria? Was there not a Roman garrison looking down from the castle into the very Temple courts where this boastful falsehood was uttered? It required some hardihood to say, 'Never in bondage to any man,' in the face of such a history, and such a present. But was it not just an instance of the strange power which we all have and exercise, of ignoring disagreeable facts, and by ingenious manipulation taking the wrinkles out of the photograph? The Jews were perhaps not misunderstanding Jesus Christ quite so much as these words may suggest. If He had been promising, as they chose to assume, political and external liberty, I fancy they would have risen to the bait a little more eagerly than they did to His words.

But be that as it may, this strange answer of theirs suggests that power of ignoring what we do not want to see, not only in the way in which I have suggested, but also in another. For if they had any inkling of what Jesus meant by slavery and freedom, they, by such words as these, put away from themselves the thought that they were, in any deep and inward sense, bondsmen, and that a message of liberty had any application to them. Ah, dear friends! there was a

great deal of human nature in these men, who thus put up a screen between them and the penetrating words of our Lord. Were they not doing just what many of us—all of us to some extent—do: ignoring the facts of their own necessities, of their own spiritual condition, denying the plain lessons of experience? Like them, are not we too often refusing to look in the face the fact that we all, apart from Him, are really in bondage? Because we do not realise the slavery, are we not indifferent to the offer of freedom? ‘We were never in bondage’; consequently we add, ‘How sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?’ So then, my text brings us to think of three things: our bondage, our ignorance of our bondage, our consequent indifference to Christ’s offer of liberty. Let me say a word or two about each of these.

First as to—

I. Our bondage.

Christ follows the vain boast in the text, with the calm, grave, profound explanation of what He meant: ‘Whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin.’ That is true in two ways. By the act of sinning a man shows that he is the slave of an alien power that has captured him; and in the act of sinning, he rivets the chains and increases the tyranny. He is a slave, or he would not obey sin. He is more a slave because he has again obeyed it. Now, do not let us run away with the idea that when Jesus speaks of sin and its bondage, He is thinking only, or mainly, of gross outrages and contradictions of the plain law of morality and decency, that He is thinking only of external acts which all men brand as being wrong, or of those which law qualifies as crimes. We have to go far deeper than that, and into a far more inward region of life than

that, before we come to apprehend the inwardness and the depth of the Christian conception of what sin is. We have to bring our whole life close up against God, and then to judge its deeds thereby. Therefore, though I know I am speaking to a mass of respectable, law-abiding people, very few of you having any knowledge of the grosser and uglier forms of transgression, and I dare say none of you having any experience of what it is to sin against human law, though I do not charge you—God forbid!—with *vices*, and still less with *crimes*, I bring to each man's conscience a far more searching word than either of these two, when I say, 'We all have *sinned* and come short of the glory of God.' This declaration of the universality and reality of the bondage of sin is only the turning into plain words of a fact which is of universal experience, though it may be of a very much less universal consciousness. We may not be aware of the fact, because, as I have to show you, we do not direct our attention to it. But there it is; and the truth is that every man, however noble his aspirations sometimes, however pure and high his convictions, and however honest in the main may be his attempts to do what is right, when he deals honestly with himself, becomes more or less conscious of just that experience which a great expert in soul analysis and self-examination made: 'I find a law'—an influence working upon my heart with the inevitableness and certainty of law—'that when I would do good, evil is present with me.'

We all know that, whether we regard it as we ought or no. We all say Amen to that, when it is forced upon our attention. There is something in us that thwarts aspiration towards good, and inclines to evil.

'What will but felt the fleshly screen?'

And it is not only a screen. It not only prevents us from rising as high as we would, but it sinks us so low as to do deeds that something within us recoils from and brands as evil. Jesus teaches us that he who commits sin is the slave of sin; that is to say, that an alien power has captured and is coercing the wrongdoer. That teaching does not destroy responsibility, but it kindles hope. A foreign foe, who has invaded the land, may be driven out of the land, and all his prisoners set free, if a stronger than he comes against him. Christianity is called gloomy and stern, because it preaches the corruption of man's heart. Is it not a gospel to draw a distinction between the evil that a man does, and the self that a man may be? Is it not better, more hopeful, more of a true evangel, to say to a man, 'Sin dwelleth in you,' than to say, 'What is called sin is only the necessary action of human nature'? To believe that their present condition is not slavery makes men hopeless of ever gaining freedom, and the true gospel of the emancipation of humanity rests on the Christian doctrine of the bondage of sin.

Let me remind you that freedom consists not in the absence of external constraints, but in the animal in us being governed by the will, for when the flesh is free the man is a slave. And it means that the will should be governed by the conscience; and it means that the conscience should be governed by God. These are the stages. Men are built in three stories, so to speak. Down at the bottom, and to be kept there, are inclinations, passions, lust, desires, all which are but blind aimings after their appropriate satisfaction, without any question as to whether the satisfaction is right or wrong; and above that a dominant will which is meant to control, and above that a conscience. That is the

pyramid; and as by the sunshine on the gilded top of some spire, the shining apex, the conscience, is illumined when the light of God falls upon it. And when a man is built in that fashion, and keeps to that fashion, then, and only then, is he free.

I need not remind you of how the metaphor of my text receives its most tragical and yet most common illustration and confirmation in the awful fact of the power of any evil thing, once thought or done by a man, to reproduce itself, onwards and ever onwards. It is a far commoner thing for a man never to have done some given evil, never to have got drunk, never to have stolen, or the like, than to have done it only once. I have heard of a mysterious illness, in which at first medical analysis detected with difficulty one single bacterion in a great quantity of blood. But in a few days, so had they multiplied, that no drop could be taken anywhere from the veins which was not full of them. That is how men get under the slavery of any evil thing; and habit becomes stronger than anything except that 'strong Son of God, immortal Love,' whose Spirit can conquer even it. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye that are wont to do evil learn to do well.' The bondage is real and hard.

My text suggests to us that strange, sad fact—

II. Our ignorance of our slavery.

'We were never in bondage to any man,' said the Jews. We are but too apt to repeat the empty boast, and as they forgot Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus and Augustus, we forget our failures, our faults, our sins. We ignore them. Is not that, too, a plain fact of experience? A sadly large percentage of men never have really opened their eyes to the undeniable

truth that sin has dominion over them. They go along on the surface of things, keeping to the shallows of human life, occupying themselves with their various duties and enjoyments, and they never know, just because they shut their eyes to facts, or rather turn their eyes away from facts—what is their real condition in God's sight. Some of my present hearers are, in regard to this matter, what the old Puritans used to call 'Gospel-hardened.' They have their hearts and minds, I was going to say water-proofed, by repeated application to them, as I am trying to apply them now, of truths which but add one more film to the layers between their hearts and the Gospel. Because they are so familiar with the words of our message, they all but lose the faculty of bringing its power into contact with themselves. Oh! if I could overcome that tendency which there is in all regular church and chapel-goers to make themselves comfortable in their corners, and suppose that the man in the pulpit is saying what he ought to say, and that they need not give much heed to his message, because they have heard it all before—if I could once get the sharp point of this great Christian truth of our slavery under sin, through the manifold layers with which your heart is encrusted, you would find out the reality and pressure of a good many things that some of you think very phantasmal and of little consequence.

There is nothing about us that is more remarkable and more awful, when you come to think of it, than the power that we have, by not attending to something, of making that something practically non-existent. The great search-lights, that they now have on battle-ships, will fling a beam of terrible revealing power on one small segment of the vast circle of the sea; and all

the rest, though it may be filled with the enemy's fleet, will be lying in darkness. So just because we cannot get you to think of the facts of your slavery to sin, the facts are non-existent as far as you are concerned. Let me plead with you. Surely, surely it is not a thing worthy of a man never to go down into the deep places of your own hearts and see the ugly things that coil and wrestle and swarm and multiply there! Ezekiel was once led to a place where, through a hole broken in the wall, there was shown him an inner chamber, on the walls of which were painted the hideous idols of the heathen. And there, in the presence of the foul shapes, stood venerable priests and official dignitaries of Israel, with their censers in their hands, and their backs to the oracle of God. There is a chamber like that in all our hearts; and it would be a great deal better that we should go down, through the hole in the wall, and see it, than that we should live, as so many of us do, in this fool's paradise of ignorance of our own sin. It is because we will not attend to the facts that we ignore the facts. The evils that we do, and that we cherish undone in our hearts, are like the wreckers on some stormy coast, who begin operations by taking the tongue out of the bell that hangs on the buoy, and putting out the light that beams from the beacon. Sin chokes conscience; and so the worse a man is, the less he feels himself to be bad; and while a saint will be tortured with agonies of remorse for some slight peccadillo, a brigand will add a murder or two to his list, and wipe his mouth and say, 'I have done no harm.' We are ignorant of our sins because we bribe our consciences, because we drug our consciences, and will not attend to the facts of our own spiritual being.

That ignorance of our bondage is characteristic of the tone of mind of this generation. Things have changed in that respect, as in a great many others, since I was a boy. I do not hear now, from people who desire to unite themselves to Jesus Christ, the deep, poignant penitence and confession of sin that one used to hear. I do not hear the fact of sin, its gravity and universality, preached from pulpits in the way it used to be. I notice in the ordinary average man a tendency to think more about environment and heredity than about individual responsibility, and, on the whole, a very much lowered sense of the depth and the power and the universality of transgression. And that is why, to a large extent, the Christianity of this generation is so shallow a thing as it is.

That brings me, lastly, to say a word about—

III. The consequent indifference to Christ's offer of freedom.

‘How sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?’ Of course, if these Jews had no consciousness of bondage, there was no attraction for them in a promise of freedom.

That remark opens out two thoughts, on which I do not dwell. First, the ignoring of the fact of sin which is so common amongst us all to-day, makes it impossible to understand Christ and Christianity. Brethren, that great Gospel, and that great Lord who is the subject of the Gospel, have many other aspects than this. But this is the central thought as to it and Him, that it is the emancipation from sin, because He is the Emancipator. ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach deliverance to the captives.’ And wherever we find, as we do find in many quarters to-day, that the central fact of Christianity, the Death for the sin of the world, is

deposed from its place, there the life-blood is ebbing out of the Gospel. Historically, the beginning of almost all heresies has been the underestimate of the fact of sin. As long as you dwell in the shallows of human experience, a shallow Christianity and a shallow Christ will be enough for you. But when once you get to understand the depths of your own need, and the depths of your brother's need, then nothing less than the Christ who died to solve the problem, insoluble else, of how to emancipate the soul and the world from the tyranny of sin, will be enough for you. Once 'the waters of the great deep are broken up,' and the floods are out, there is nothing for it but the Ark. It is not enough, then, to speak of a human Christ; it is not enough, when a man's conscience has been roused, not to exaggeration, but to clear sight, of what he is—it is not enough, then, to speak of a pattern Christ, or of a teaching Christ. Ah! we want more than that. We want 'that which first of all I delivered unto you, how that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.'

And, brethren, just as the ignoring of the fact of sin makes the understanding of Christ and His word impossible, so it makes real reception of Him for ourselves impossible. Many men are brought near to Jesus by other roads; thank God for it! There are a thousand ways to the Cross, but it is the Cross that we must clasp, if in any true sense we are to clasp Christ. And there is all the difference between the superficial, partial, and easy-going profession of Christianity which is so common amongst us to-day, and the life-and-death clutching and clinging to Him which comes when, and only when, a man feels that the tyrant whom he served as a slave is close behind him, and that his only chance

of freedom is to hold fast by the horns of the altar of the Sanctuary, and to cleave to the Christ in whom, and in whom alone, we are free indeed.

THE SERVANT AND THE SON

‘And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.’

JOHN viii. 35.

I MUST first ask your attention to a remark or two on what I conceive to be the force and connection of this passage. There is nothing in the words themselves requiring explanation or illustration. They are simple and plain enough; but their bearing on what precedes and follows, and the application which they were intended to have, present very considerable difficulty.

‘The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.’ This at least is clear, that our Lord is speaking of *servant* and *son* generically, or in other words, is drawing a contrast between the two relations, wherever they are found, in the matter of permanence. A son is a natural, inalienable part of the family, whatever the family may be; a slave is not. He may be acquired, he may be sold, or given away to another master, or set free. In Jewish servitude—with which Christ’s hearers were chiefly familiar—there was special provision against the slave’s continuing ‘in the house for ever.’ At the Jubilee, unless he voluntarily elected to give himself up in perpetuity to his master (so passing from a state of involuntary slavery to one of willing servitude, which ceased thereby to be bondage)—in token whereof he had his ear fastened to the door-post with an awl through it—he was free to

depart where he liked. But a son is bound to his father's household by a tie which no distance breaks, and no time wears away.

Then comes the question, what application does Christ mean to be made of this general truth about the characteristic difference between service and sonship? The common answer seems to me to be very unsatisfactory. It is, in brief, this—that the servants who abide not in the house for ever are the Jews who, because they regarded themselves as bound to God only by the harsh bond of constrained obedience, and were slaves, not sons at heart, would certainly forfeit their special national privileges, and be cast out of the house—the land of Israel or the old covenant. According to that interpretation, the general statement would in effect be made special by inserting ‘of God’ in the clause, and would mean substantially this—he who is only an unwilling servant—a slave—of God’s, has no permanent place in the household of God.

But you should observe that, in the previous verse, the master of the servant is distinctly specified—‘he that committeth sin is the slave of *sin*.’ And it is a most violent and sudden twist of the connection to make it turn away all at once from speaking of slaves of sin to speak of slaves of God. Notice, too, that both clauses of our text, the former as well as the latter, are laid as the double grounds on which the conclusion reposes—‘If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.’ Keeping these two points in view, it seems impossible to accept the ordinary explanation of the words, which wrenches them forcibly apart from the preceding verse, and disconnects them from the conclusion which our Lord founds on them in the subsequent verse, whilst it brings in a wholly irrelevant

thought about the Jews being turned out of Canaan, because they were slaves and not sons of God.

Supposing, then, that whilst the words speak about servants and sons generically, laying down a general principle that applies to all the members of each class, the immediate application is meant to be to the slaves of *sin*, of whom He has just been speaking, would the words so referred yield an appropriate and adequate sense? What would be the force of the thought that Sin's slave does not abide for ever in Sin's house? Would it not be the declaration of the great truth that, howsoever hard and long the bondage and servitude of sin had been, yet the very relation itself is of such a character that it needs not to be perpetual, but bears upon its front the hope that one day the captive may come out of the prison-house and shake himself loose from his connection with this tyrant's household, of which he has become a part? However long and weary the years of bondage, the slave is not in his true home, nor incorporated hopelessly into his taskmaster's family. There is no natural affinity between him and his lord; but only a bond which may be snapped at any moment, if one can be found strong enough to 'enter the strong man's house, and spoil his goods.' The saying, then, may be regarded as stating the possibility of emancipation as contained in the very nature of the bondage.

The next clause goes on to declare that into the midst of this tyrant's household there has come one who is a Son, and abides for ever, by natural immutable relationship, in the household of God. It is clear that the first application of the general statement, that a son is for ever part of his father's family, must be to Christ. It is therefore clear that the house in which

He abides *is* the house of God. Sin's house, in so far as that expression denotes this fair world, belongs to God; and the tyranny which that grim despot wields is usurpation. Into the midst of human society He comes who is a Son for ever, and for ever dwells with the Father; and by reason of His everlasting Sonship and abode with God, He is able to convert the possibility of deliverance, which the very nature of the bondage proclaims, into actual fact, and to set us free. The slave need not abide for ever—*there* is hope. 'The Son abides ever'—*there* is hope still brighter.

And on both facts reposes the grand certainty—'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' If He have the will, as He has the power—if it shall be that He will really use his unquestionable prerogative for the purpose for which men, with eyes dim with tears and hearts torn by desperate hopes, long through a thousand generations—then ye shall be free indeed. Nor, in that case, will bare freedom only be ours, but, as is implied by the antithesis of our text, emancipation will be adoption, and to pass out of the state of the slave will be to pass into the alternative relation—the state of a son.

I have thus put briefly, but as far as I can see fairly, the sequence of thought which our Lord would here bring before us; and I would ask you to consider whether, so understood, the words do not hold together better, and yield a more consistent and impressive meaning than in the usual interpretation of them. Let me briefly try to expand a little further the principles which are thus set forth.

I. There is first the possible ending of the tyranny of sin.

'A slave abides not in the house for ever.' There-

fore the very fact that the service of sin is so hard a slavery shows it to be unnatural, abnormal, and capable of a termination. All the world has dimly hoped that it was so, if not from love of good, at all events from weariness of evil, and from pain of conscience. But no man has been sure of it, apart from the influence of revelation. It is Christ alone who makes us certain that this universal condition is yet an unnatural one, from which restoration is possible for us all. He alone shows us that the black walls of the prison-house where we toil, solid seeming, high above our power to scale, and clammy with the sighs of a thousand generations though they be, are undermined and tottering. Deliverance is possible. For, in the light of God's revelation, we see that the slave-master is an usurper. Sin is clearly not natural to man, as God meant him to be, howsoever it may seem to have entwined itself around his life. It is something supervening, not original; a deformity, not a part of the ideal by which God made him.

The most superficial glance at our own nature and condition, the constitution of our being, our capacities or relations, is enough to show that. The witnesses are within us. Look at these minds of ours that can originate and entertain 'thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof that they were born for immortality,' at those hearts with their rich treasures of transcendent affections wasted, as some drunken spendthrift throws handfuls of gold among a ragged mob; at these wills so weak and yet so strong, ever craving for some absolute authority to guide them, and yet ever impotently trying to be 'a law unto themselves'; at these consciences, so sensitive and yet so dull, waking up only when the evil is done, like careless warders who lock the prison doors with all safety after the prisoner has fled, powerless to

prevent but strong to avenge—voices which have no means of getting their behests obeyed, and yet are the echo of the supreme, personal Lawgiver's voice. Think of the manifest disproportion between ourselves as we are, and as we know we might be; remember that in this region *might* and *ought* are the same. And then say whether this universal condition of sinfulness is not plainly and in the deepest sense of the word—unnatural; a fungus, not a true growth; a monstrosity or abnormal development; a diseased excrescence or wen, and not sound, healthy flesh.

Then, if so, it is clear that there is no such relation between a sinful man and his sin as that deliverance from it is impossible. It must be possible to part them, and to leave the man stronger for the loss of what made him weak, and more himself by the plucking off him of the venomous beast that has fastened upon his life. Somehow or other it must be possible to separate me from my sin, to cast that behind God's back into the depths of the sea, and to set me before His face in light and love. If we are slaves of Sin, then we may be transferred from its household and brought to our true home in our Father's house. Here, then, is the blessed hope for us all. Howsoever the fetters may have galled and mortified the limbs and eaten into the stiffened wrists, they may be struck off. No man is condemned to a hopeless necessary continuance in evil. We may have been living all our days in it, and, so far as in us lies, may have corrupted and perverted our whole nature. Be it so. Still the foul thing has not become so intertwined with our life that it cannot be wrenched away. No matter what we are, for us all there is a possibility of deliverance. For criminals below the gallows with the rope around their necks, for those

who have gone farthest into the far country of forgetfulness of God, and there have wasted themselves in riotous living—ay, and for those who are harder to touch and more hopeless than publicans and harlots—the sleek, orthodox, respectable Scribes and Pharisees, the church and chapel going people, saturated with the form of religion and uninfluenced by its power—for all, freedom is possible.

And let me remind you that men have always cherished those convictions; even when they seemed to have the least reason for them, have cherished them obstinately in spite of history and of experience. They have tried to set themselves free, and their attempts have come to nothing; and yet, after all failures, this 'hope' has sprung 'immortal in the human breast.' People who have tried in vain to cure themselves of some awkward habit, some peculiarity of manner, some intonation of voice, yet believe that somehow or other there is a power fit to break from them all the chains of evil and to set them free. Strange, is it not? Pathetic, tragic, except on one hypothesis. I know few things sadder—unless we believe in Christ, the Deliverer, as I hope most of us do—than that indestructible hope with which a thousand sinful generations have lived, and yet have died without its fulfilment. What countless unfulfilled aspirations, what baffled trust, what gleams of light that faded and seemed treacherous as the morning red that dies into rainy grey before the day is old! And are the noblest visions, then, the falsest? and are we to believe the bitter creed that smiles sadly at these hopes as airy dreams? or is it true—as the world has believed, though it knew not how its hope was to be fulfilled—that the tyranny which has ruled the earth and built high the black walls of its prison-

house round all humanity is, after all, a usurpation which had a beginning later than man, and will have an end?

True, *we* cannot make the division between ourselves and our sin, nor effect the deliverance. It is like some cancer—a blood disease. We may pare and cut away the rotting flesh—the single manifestations of the evil we can do something to reduce. But the source of these is floating through the veins, and comes pulsing from the heart. A deeper cure than our surgery is needed, a transfusion of fresh blood from an untainted source. Sin is not our personality, and so we may have it removed and live. But sin has become so entwined with ourselves that we cannot separate the tangled mass. The demoniac in the Gospels, who in his confused consciousness did not know which was devil and which was man, and when the question was put, ‘What is thy name?’ gave the awful answer, which blends so strangely the voice of both, ‘*My name is legion, for we are many,*’ could not shake off the demon that rode him. No more can we. And yet it can be dragged from its lair. Rending and tearing, convulsions and foaming, wounds and semi-death may accompany the separation. Better these than ‘the strong man armed, keeping his goods in peace.’ The voice that said, ‘Thou foul spirit, I charge thee come out of him,’ has power still.

Whence arise these hopes, cherished in spite of all failures? They are like morning dreams which the proverb tells us are true. Their fulfilment is made probable by the very fact of their existence; for ‘God never sends mouths, but He sends meat to feed them.’ Their fulfilment lies in Him who fulfils the ‘unconscious prophecies’ and the conscious cravings of heathendom and humanity—even in the Christ who is all that the

world wants, and more than all that we or our brethren have dared to hope.

So much then for the first idea, contained in these words—that of the possibility, inherent in the very nature of the case, of emancipation from the burden and bondage of sin. The next verse goes on to declare how this possibility is converted into fact. So we have—

II. The actual Deliverer.

The slave need not abide for ever; but is there any one who will take him out of the unnatural state of slavery? The relationship is capable of being terminated, if there is any one who will terminate it. And the question whether there be, is answered in these words, ‘The Son abideth ever,’ which, while they are primarily a general statement, applying to all sons as such, have unquestionably a specific reference to our Lord Himself. That I presume is clear from the fact that there is founded on them, with a ‘therefore,’ to bind it firmly to them, the grand conclusion, ‘If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.’

Notice, too, that if the contrasted statements of our text are to be so put together as to give ground for that joyous certainty of true freedom as the Son’s gift, then somehow or other the two houses must be the same; or at least the Son, who is ever in His Father’s house, must yet, while thus abiding, also be in the midst of the bondsmen in the dark fortress of the tyrant. That is but a figurative way of putting the necessity which even our consciences and hearts, made wise by bitter experience of failure, can discern—that our freedom from sin must come from a power beyond the circle of humanity, and yet must be diffused from a source within the circle. Unless it come from above it

will not be able to lift us out of the pit of the prison-house; but unless it be on our level we shall not be able to grasp it. The Deliverer must Himself be free; therefore He must be removed from the fatal continuity of evil, which, like a lengthened chain, shackles all the prisoners together. The Deliverer must be like those whom He would help, and be a sharer in their condition. The contradictory requirements are harmonised in One, of whom it was spoken long ago, 'He hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives'; and who has Himself claimed to unite them both in His own person: 'No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.' He is truly one of us, the very perfection of humanity; the whole essential characteristics of manhood are in Him. He has come down from heaven, entered the prison-house, become one of the company of slaves—and yet all the while 'is in heaven,' abiding in that true and unbroken fellowship with God of which He testified when He said, 'The Father hath not left Me alone.' He is the Son of Man which came down from heaven, and He is 'the only begotten Son which *is* in the bosom of the Father.' Therefore is He the Deliverer of His brethren.

The conversion, then, of the mere possibility of freedom into actual fact requires two things—that the Deliverer should be the Son of God and that He should be the Son for ever. If we are ever, dear friends, to be rescued from the iron grip of this miserable bondage, it must be by one who wields and brings, and *is*, the energy, and the wisdom, and the all-bestowing love of the Father. It must be by one who is a Son in that full emphatic sense of perfect kindred in, and participation of, the boundless Godhead which

none other possesses. None less mighty has the power, none less patient has the love, which such a task needs. It must be *The Son* who sets us free.

And so I come to you with that living central truth of the Gospel, and beseech you, dear brethren, to lay to heart the solemn fact of our need, and the blessed answer to it which is given to us all in Christ. 'Such an High Priest became us.' He and His work are in accurate correspondence with our wants. There is no deliverance possible from this clinging curse of corruption unless there have come into the very midst of us bondsmen, one who shares our nature but does not share our sin, who is above us and yet beside us, who is separate from sinners and yet cleaveth closer than a brother to the most polluted, whose hands are pure and yet whose heart is so tender that He will lay His pure hand unshrinking on leprosy and death, who is in all points like ourselves and yet is unfettered by the chains under which we groan and die. And this impossible combination we have, blessed be God! in that dear Lord. Christ is the Son of God and the brother of every man. *There* is the life, fontal not derived, divine that it may be human; there is Manhood unstained by sin, having no affinity with evil, and in its completeness a living protest against the lie that sin is an integral part of human nature, and a prophecy that we too may be like Him, set free from bondage and perfected in glory. 'God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' Yes! a Son will set free, none other will. Yes! the Son has set free. We need none other.

Further, our Lord puts emphasis here on the perpetual abiding of the Son, as a part of the basis of His

fitness for the mighty work. We and all men to the end of time have to trust to a living Saviour, who is as near to the latest generations as He was to those that gathered round His cross on earth. Nay, we may even say that He is nearer to save and fuller of power to bless, not indeed in Himself, but in our apprehensions of His nearness and fulness, which should be deepened by all that has passed since He ascended up on high. Have not the might of His work and the majesty of His person gained fresh illustrations from the experience of all these centuries? As distance has paled other lights, and hidden lower watch-towers below the horizon, have we not learned thereby to estimate more truly the brightness of the one undying flame which burns across the waste nor knows diminution by space nor extinction by time, and to measure more accurately the height of that rallying-point for the nations which towers higher and higher as we recede from it? Surely, if we will faithfully use the inspired record, the Indwelling Spirit, the voice of our own experience, and the history of God's Church, we may come, by reason of the very lapse of ages, and all which they have brought of testing and of triumph, to apprehend yet more of the fulness of Christ's freedom than was possible at first. 'It is expedient for you that I go away.'

Nor is this all; for the Son who bids us rejoice, both for His sake and ours, that He goes to the Father, was with the Father while He walked on earth, and is with us while He is on the throne of God. He abideth ever by our sides to bless and set free. He carries on our deliverance by the present forth-putting of His love and power, even as He effected it by His Cross. 'This man, because He continueth ever, is able to save unto the uttermost.' We have an ever-living Saviour to

trust to. 'The Son abideth for ever.' 'If He therefore make us free, we shall be free indeed.'

III. Then, finally, we may very briefly touch upon the thought that is implied here and in the whole context—namely, the abiding Sonship which constitutes the slave's emancipation.

The process of deliverance is the transference from the one household to the other. We are set free from our bondage when, through Christ, we receive the adoption, and cry 'Abba, Father!' This filial Spirit, the Spirit of life which was in Christ, and this alone, 'makes us free from the law of sin and death.' The only way by which a man is reclaimed from obedience to sin is by his learning to call God Father, and by receiving into his evil nature the life, kindred with the paternal source, which owns no allegiance to his former task-master. The only way by which a man receives that new life from God which has nothing to do with sin, and that consciousness of kindred with God which makes the name 'Father' natural to his heart, is by simple faith in Christ, who gives power to become sons of God to as many as receive Him.

There are but two conditions in which we can stand. One or other of them must be ours. The alternatives are—slaves of sin, or sons of God. What a contrast both in the relation and in that to which it is sustained! Slaves or sons! God or Sin! On the one side tyrannous bondage, on the other gentle swaying love. On the one side the whip and the lash, on the other, 'My son, hear the instruction of thy Father.' On the one side is *such* a master, to obey whom is degradation, and like all base-born usurpers, cruel as lawless. What a wretched humiliation for a man with such a nature to be the serf of such a lord—to be, as Milton says, 'the

dejected and downtrodden vassal of perdition!' On the other side is the Source of all love, the Fruition of all desires, the Fountain of all purity and all peace. And we, dear brethren, may, through Christ, draw near to Him as sons, and cry 'Abba, Father!' Then we shall abide in His house for ever, in the happy consciousness of His Fatherhood and love, compassed by His care, and enriched by His gifts, and glad to serve, and blessed in obedience. Earth's changes will not take us away from our rest in God, nor its distractions rob us of the sweetness of kindred with Him. Whithersoever we go we may still be at home with God; whatsoever we do we may still be about our Father's business. Death itself will not break our Sonship, nor our consciousness of it. We shall but pass from an outer to an inner abiding-place in our Father's house, the place prepared for us by the Son, who set us free. 'Thou art no more a servant, but a son,' and if sons, then 'heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.'

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIS FIRST COMING

'... I proceeded forth, and came from God.'—JOHN viii. 42.

'BACK to Jesus' is the watchword of a growing and influential school to-day. There is a great deal in the cry, and in the drift of thought which it represents, with which every wise Christian must be in sympathy. But it covers very different tendencies. In some cases it means reverent submission to Jesus Christ, and acceptance of all His words. In some cases it is associated with a very free and arbitrary handling

of the Gospels, which substantially results in the rejection, as not genuine, of all Christ's sayings that point in the direction of His supernatural origin or divine power. The underlying motive in such cases is the wish to get away from the Epistles back to the supposed simpler teaching of the Sage and Saint of Nazareth. 'Back to Jesus' means, in many cases, 'get rid of Paul, and keep only as much of Matthew and the other Evangelists as may yield the image of a humanitarian Christ.' Doctrinal prepossessions lie below the critical processes.

But it is somewhat strange that those who go furthest in the direction of this free-and-easy handling of the records seem to proceed upon the principle that if once we can get at what Jesus said and thought about Himself and His mission, we have got to absolute truth. Now, that is strange, and especially strange from their point of view. For we do not generally accept a man's estimate of himself, especially if it is a high one, as conclusive. Experience has taught us to take the Pharisee's short way of dealing with such claims. 'Thou bearest record of Thyself; Thy record is not true.' But the world is ready to take Christ at His own valuation. How comes that?

I want to go 'back to Christ' now, and to collect what He Himself said about His mission. My subject is not the single saying that I have read, but the whole class of passages to which it belongs. They are somewhat numerous; and, unless I am very much mistaken, they lay deep and broad and unshakable the foundation for the very conception of Christ which the doctrinal Epistles draw out into distinct statements. If Jesus said about Himself and His work what the Gospels unanimously report Him to have

said, or anything like it, then the doctrines of Paul, and Peter, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, and John, are the only adequate explanation, and they are *but* the explanation, of His claims.

Now, with these preliminary remarks let me try to gather these sayings of the Lord about Himself and His work under two or three heads, which may classify them, and help us.

I. First, then, they give us Christ's own estimate of His heavenly origin and world-wide significance.

It is very remarkable that He only once speaks of having been 'born,' and that was under circumstances, as I shall have to show you presently, which explain the unusual expression. But at all other times it is either 'I come,' 'I am come,' 'the Son of Man came'; or it is 'I am sent.' Now that may be purely accidental, and it is quite conceivable that a man might drop into such a form of speech, if he were profoundly conscious of having a great work to do in the world, without any notion of thereby claiming anything extraordinary beyond the fact of his mission. But the persistent, exclusive use of the term does seem to indicate that Jesus Christ meant to claim something more than is common to humanity. And the presumption that He did so is elevated into certainty if you will notice, and bear with me whilst I adduce, two or three instances in which He expands the expression, so as to give us a glimpse of the fulness of its contents.

One of these is this word of my text, 'I proceeded forth'; that points to a condition in which He was before His earthly appearance, and which He voluntarily left. 'I came from God'; that points to His earthly life as being the permanent result of an initial act, which was voluntary and His own, and behind which

stretched an indefinite existence. That is fair commenting, and nothing more.

The presumption is made still more certain if we turn to another scene, where, to soothe His sorrowing friends in the upper chamber, He said, 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world.' There was one solemn motion, self-originated, and its two termini were the Father, beyond the reach of sight, and the world, the scene of His visible manifestation. And that solemn motion necessarily involved the turning upon itself, and the returning to the Source, as He goes on to say, 'Again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father.' The same 'I' vibrates between the unseen abode with the Father, and the visible manifestation upon earth; and the same volition is at work in the coming into, and the departing from, this earthly scene.

Again, I point to other words, spoken in strangely different circumstances, and, therefore, with an entirely different colouring. To the Roman governor, with his half-amused contempt for the tatterdemalion of a King that stood before him, and his scornful question, in the full flush of conscious, vulgar, material power, 'Art *Thou* a King, then?' He answered, 'To this end was I born'—that was all that Pilate could understand—'and for this cause came I into the world,' why was that added? Was it a synonym for being born? No! it was something that lay behind the birth. And, if I might venture to say so, Christ added to the former clause, which was level with Pilate's apprehension, the full explanation of the term, unusual on His lips, as a kind of satisfaction to His own consciousness, rather than for any enlightenment that it would bring to its original hearer, and because He could not,

even for a moment, adopt only language which might carry to some ears the inference that His birth was His beginning, or was as the birth of other men.

Now, brethren, I do not think that I am exaggerating anything in my interpretation of these three sayings, and therefore I make bold to say that when the Apostle Paul, in his intensely doctrinal fashion, talks about Jesus Christ being in the form of God, and not considering equality with God, as a thing to be eagerly grasped at, but emptying Himself, and being in the form of a servant; and found in fashion as a man; or when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, 'Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same'; or when John says 'the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,' they are saying nothing more than Jesus Christ had said about Himself. 'Back to Christ!' Yes! by all means; and back to the Christ who declared that He was before He was born; that He left the eternal, divine glory by His own act; that by His own volition He entered into the limitations of humanity, 'and was not ashamed'—why should a *man* be so?—to be called our brother.

So much, then, for the first of the lessons to be gathered from these great sayings. Let me, just in a sentence, refer to another. We find in these sayings clear indications of the world-wide significance which, in Christ's consciousness, attached to Himself and His work. I do not need to quote many of them. There are only two with which I will trouble you; one in which He says, 'I am the Light of *the world*, that whosoever believeth in Me might not abide in darkness'; and the other, in which He says, 'I came not to judge the *world*, but to save the *world*.' In His earthly

career He recognised His limitation as being 'not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' And yet His love and His prescient eye went out from the very beginning, as the synagogue in Nazareth witnesses, to the 'other sheep which are not of this fold'; to the lepers and the widows outside of Israel, and the whole race of mankind.

Think, think! 'the carpenter's Son,' with no name, with no culture, with no material force, in that little village hidden away amongst the hills in half-Gentile Galilee, standing up there, in that humble synagogue and saying, 'My mission is to humanity.' And think how nineteen centuries have vindicated what seemed an idle boast.

II. But, secondly, I find in these sayings collectively our Lord's conception of the purposes of His coming.

I gather them together as briefly as may be. 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.' 'The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' 'I am come, not to judge the world, but to save the world.' Salvation, then, is the purpose. Take another class. 'I am come that they might have life.' 'The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven that He may give life to the world.' Salvation, then, or the communication of life, is the purpose. Yet again, 'I am come, a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me may not abide in darkness.' Salvation, then, or the communication of life, or the flooding of the world with light, such are the purposes, as Jesus saw them, of His coming.

Think of the conception of humanity, that is, of you and me, and of my needs and yours, which underlies these solemn words—dead; in peril; famished; dark and

blind—that is humanity, as it presented itself before the meek Sage of Nazareth. And to deal with a humanity so full of desperate needs, and so utterly incapable of any kind of self-help, was the problem which this audacious young Rabbi grappled, and said that He had solved. That is tremendous. And not only is it tremendous, but it may come to us with a suggestion that we had better see whether the terms in which He described the world have any application to us, and, if so, what we mean to do. Christ looked below the surface. He regarded men mainly in their relation to God, and God's laws, and He beheld a universal pall spread over all nations, and every man as having come short of the glory of God.

Think, again, how in this declaration of purpose there lies the clearest consciousness of non-participation in that universal condition. He who comes and arrogates to himself the power and the right to deal with these necessities must himself be clear from all implication in them. Think of the consciousness of inexhaustible power, as well as the outgoing motion of a boundless love, which such a notion of His life's work proves Christ to have possessed. What a superb confidence in the healing power of His touch, in the exuberant abundance of vitality, by which He was able to breathe a soul beneath the ribs of all the corpses in the valley of dry bones! What an unfailing fountain of light there must have been in His own consciousness of Himself, that He should venture upon such words as these!

And again, I say, His tremendous claim to be able to save the world in the full sense of delivering from all moral and physical evil, and endowing with all moral and physical good, is verified by facts. He has

done it for some of us; He is doing it every day; and if He does not do it to the world, it is not because He has not the power, but because the world will not submit to the power.

Did Peter, or John, or Paul ever say more about His work than He said Himself? Are not their most rapturous sayings only the expansion and the setting forth of the ground and the consequences of His own statements? 'Back to Christ,' the Saviour, the Life-giver, and the Light-bringer.

III. Note, from these collective sayings, our Lord's conception of the manner in which the purpose of His life was to be discharged.

Again I summarise. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' 'To this end came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth.' 'I am come to send fire on earth.' Now observe that these three last statements of the manner in which He discharges His work—viz. calling sinners to repentance, bearing witness to the truth, and sending fire on earth, are subordinate to the great purpose which was stated in the first of the passages quoted, 'the Son of Man is come . . . to give His life a ransom for many.' The calling of sinners to repentance, and the bearing witness to the truth, fall mainly under the ministering which He did upon earth. Sending fire on earth is, as His own words abundantly show, only possible as the result of His giving His life a ransom for many. And so we have to regard the manner of His effecting His purpose as falling into two great portions, whereof the one covers the earthly life of ministration, with all the gentle words that drew

publicans and harlots, and melted susceptible souls into a passion and a flood of repentance that needed not to be repented of, and with its witness to the truth by all the gracious words that came from His lips, and most chiefly by the witness of His life, which declared God to men, and revealed men to themselves.

But, side by side with that ministration by life, separable from it, and the shining apex of the great pyramid that was raised day by day, and deed by deed, stands His death as the 'ransom for many.' Brethren, conceptions of Christ's manner of saving the world which put all the emphasis on His witnessing to the truth, or on His gracious ministrations, or even upon His calling sinners to repentance, are truncated and incomplete; and, on the other hand, all these other forms of His activity are most fully operative in His death as our ransom on the Cross. For I would fain know what, in all the gentle beauty of His earthly life, has moulded and drawn hearts to self-abasement and a hearty hatred of, and turning from, their sins, like the pathos and the power of that death? and what, in all the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth, and in all the deeds of beauty with which He wrought for us the living example of duty, has so borne witness to the truth, as that same death? And what is it that kindled the fire of that swift Spirit, poured out upon the world's icy coldness, but the sacrifice which must needs precede it?

Therefore, unless we take the ransom as the chief part of the manner by which He saves the world, we do not go 'back to Christ,' nor accept His own estimate of Himself. If we do so accept, we must listen to Him saying, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up'; 'The

bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'

IV. Lastly, I find in these collective sayings our Lord's prevision of the issue of His work.

'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I am come, not to send peace, but a sword'; or, as another Evangelist has it less picturesquely, in the parallel passage, 'not peace, but rather division.' Again, His epilogue to the great story of the blind man who was made to see, and was then cast out by the blind men that would not see, is, 'for judgment am I come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.'

Jesus was under no illusions as to the issue of His work. Purpose is one thing; result is altogether another. The mission had but one intention, but it has a twofold consequence; because man's freewill comes in, and even infinite Love could not ensure that all men should accept the ransom from captivity, or all should be enkindled by the leaping fire of the divine Spirit. 'How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' That is the wail of thwarted Omnipotence; the tears of blood dropped by wounded, infinite Love. All through the ages the same issue is being realised; and it is being realised here and now. 'Some believed the word that was spoken, and some believed not.' Thus the aged Simeon's prophetic vision is fulfilled: 'This Child is set for the rise and fall of many in Israel.' Though the mission has one purpose it has a double result.

So let me urge on you, dear friends, to take Christ's words, and to take them all. There is no warrant for

the common practice of picking and choosing amongst them, and rejecting one of two sayings which come to us attested by precisely the same evidence, while we accept the other, on the ground that the one fits our notions and the other does not. 'All in all, or not at all,' should be our principle in dealing with the words of the Incarnate Truth.

As clearly as tongue can speak, He has asserted that He 'came forth from God, and came into the world.' That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of the Incarnation. As clearly as tongue can speak, He has asserted that the purpose of His coming is to save the lost, to vivify the dead, to 'give light to them that sit in darkness.' That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of man's sin and danger. As clearly as tongue can speak He has declared that the manner of His accomplishing His purpose is 'to minister,' 'to bear witness to the truth,' 'to call sinners to repentance,' 'to give His life a ransom for many.' That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of the Atonement. As clearly as tongue can speak He has asserted that after His Cross He will flood the world with fire. That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of an indwelling Spirit. As clearly as tongue can speak He has asserted that sight or blindness, life or death, depends on the reception or rejection of His words. That is the foundation of the Apostolic doctrine of the tremendous issues of salvation or of loss, which hang on our listening to Him or our turning from Him.

And it is the reason why I venture, dear brethren, to come to you now, and as Christ's unworthy ambassador beseech you in His stead that you listen to Him.

God Himself has spoken from heaven: 'This is My

beloved Son; hear Him.' 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh' to us still; 'for if they escaped not who turned away from Him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him that' now 'speaketh from heaven.'

THOU ART A SAMARITAN

'Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan?'—JOHN viii. 48.

THE multitude is fond of nicknames, and usually invents them with some accuracy of insight. But its judgment of the worth of the characteristics which it discerns is generally unreliable, for it admires what is low, and scoffs at what is pure and noble. So the censure of the crowd is apt to be praise, and its praise blame.

Jesus Christ had His full share of such missiles. None of His followers have been called by worse names than was He. But the hostile taunts flung at Him are really tributes. Collectively they form a body of evidence as to His character and work, all the more valuable because it comes from His enemies and was supposed to be fatal to His claims. His opponents' caricatures present substantially the same face as is lovingly painted by the Evangelists. This name of Samaritan, for example, shows the maliciously distorted image of some facts in His teaching and conduct. The question in the text proves that the designation had been previously in common use, and its currency proves the general feeling of its appropriateness. If we ask how Jesus earned it, we are led straight to

some of the most glorious aspects of His character and work. Let us, then, take the guidance of His enemies, and use the help of their rancorous abuse to aid us in understanding what it was in Him which struck dull brains and malicious hearts so as to give occasion for this name.

There are three points especially which seem to me to be brought out by it. The name witnesses to Christ's prophet-like boldness of rebuke of national prejudices and national sins. It witnesses to what I may call, for want of a better word, His originality. And it witnesses to His universality. These three thoughts seem to me to be the truths which underlie my text. And with them for its meaning we may answer its question with, 'Yes, ye said well that He was a Samaritan.'

I. First, then, the name witnesses to Christ's prophet-like boldness in cutting against the grain of national prejudice, and in rebuking national sins.

The occurrence which gave occasion to my text may be taken as a specimen of a whole series of facts which underlie this name. Our Lord has just been rebuking the Jews for their sinfulness, denying that they are Abraham's seed, asserting that they do not belong to God, telling them to their faces that they are slaves and children of the Devil. And they, in their folly, think that no one who was a good Jew at heart could say such bitter things about the chosen people. They hear the tongue of an enemy in such words, and so they fiercely turn upon Him, 'Thou art a Samaritan!' They did not recognise the love that underlay the sternness, the throbbing of a heart that desired their good, and therefore warned them of their evil. Nations, like individuals, too often think that

the man becomes their enemy who tells them the truth. And these people, misunderstanding the impulse of the words, and feeling keenly their sharp edge, can only suppose that He is a bad Jew, and at heart an enemy to His race, who can speak thus.

The saying then points to one outstanding characteristic of our Lord's teaching—viz. to the sternness with which He denied all validity to the merely natural descent on which the whole nation prided itself. Because of mere physical origin they fancied themselves to be Heaven's favourites, and high above these 'dogs of the uncircumcision' round them; and here came one of themselves, saying, 'You are not Abraham's children unless you do the deeds of Abraham.'

Again, Christ depreciated as of no value the mere externalisms of worship. He made a clean sweep of Rabbinical casuistry. He turned a stream of cold water upon the excited Messianic hopes of worldly dominion which so fired their hearts with enthusiasm. He never spared the lash of condemnation for the sins that were rampant round Him, and His gentle voice rose into sternness when He spoke with tears, and yet with unfaltering confidence, of the certain fatal end of it all. And so this Man, running counter to national prejudices, keeping no terms with popular delusions, despising, and trying to make others despise, the lies which led the people away, had the charge flung at His head, 'Thou art a Samaritan,' which only meant that, prophet-like, He 'set the trumpet to His mouth, and declared to the house of Israel its transgression, and to Jacob his sin.'

My friends, the same fate attends all men who play the same part. A democracy demands flattery, and

public men are more and more abasing themselves to the degradation of ministering to the supposed wishes instead of cutting dead against the grain of the wishes, if necessary, in order to meet the true wants, of the people. Wherever some one strong man stands up to oppose the wild current of popular desires, he may make up his mind that the charge of being 'a bad citizen, unpatriotic, a lover of the enemies of the people,' will be flung at him. You Christian men and women have to face the same calumnies as your Master had. The rotten eggs flung at the objects of popular execration—if I might use a somewhat violent figure—turn to roses in their flight. The praises of good men and the scoffs of loose-living and godless ones are equally valuable certificates of character. The Church which does not earn the same sort of opprobrium which attended its Master has probably failed of its duty. It is good to be called 'gloomy' and 'sour-visaged' by those whose only notion of pleasure is effervescent immorality; and it is good to be called intolerant by the crowd that desires us to be tolerant of vice. So, my friends, I want you to understand that you, too, have to tread in the Master's steps. The 'imitation of Jesus' does not consist merely in the sanctities and secrecies of communion, and the blessings of a meek and quiet heart, but includes standing where He stood, in avowed and active opposition to widespread evils, and, if need be, in the protesting opposition to popular error. And if you are called nicknames, never mind! Remember what the Master said, 'They shall bring you before kings and magistrates'—the tribunal of the many-headed is a more formidable judgment-bench than that of any king—'and it shall turn to a testimony for you.'

II. Now, secondly, this name is the witness to what I venture to call, for want of a better term, the originality of Jesus Christ.

It bears witness to the dim feeling which onlookers had that in Him was a new phenomenon, not to be accounted for by birth and descent, by training and education, or by the whole of what people nowadays call environment. He did not come out of these circumstances. This is not a regulation pattern type of Jew. He is 'a Samaritan.' That is to say, He is unlike the people among whom He dwells; and betrays that other influences than those which shaped them have gone to the making of Him.

That is one of the most marked, outstanding, and important features in the teaching and in the character of Jesus Christ, that it is absolutely independent of, and incapable of being accounted for by, anything that He derived from the circumstances in which He lived. He was a Jew, and yet He was not a Jew. He was not a Samaritan, and yet He was a Samaritan. He was not a Greek, and yet He was one. He was not a Roman, nor an Englishman, nor a Hindoo, nor an Asiatic, nor an African; and yet He had all the characteristics of these races within Himself, and held them all in the ample sweep of His perfect Manhood.

If we turn to His teaching we find that, whilst no doubt to some extent it is influenced in its forms by the necessities of its adaptation to the first listeners, there is a certain element in it far beyond anything that came from Rabbis, or even from prophets and psalmists. Modern Christian scholarship has busied itself very much in these days with studying Jewish literature, so far as it is available, in order to ascertain how far it formed the teaching, or mind, of Jesus the

Carpenter of Nazareth. There is a likeness, but the likeness only serves to make the unlikeness more conspicuous. And I, for my part, venture to assert that, whilst the form of our Lord's teaching may largely be traced to the influences under which He was brought up, and whilst the substance of some parts of it may have been anticipated by earlier Rabbis of His nation, the crowd that listened to Him on the mountain top had laid their fingers upon the more important fact when they 'wondered at His teaching,' and found the characteristic difference between it, and that of the men to whom they had listened, in the note of authority with which He spoke. Jesus never argues, He asserts; He claims; and in lieu of all arguments He gives you His own 'Verily! verily! I say unto you.'

Thus not only in its form, but in its substance, in its lofty morality, in its spiritual religion, in its revelation of the Father and the Fatherhood for all men, Christ's teaching as teaching stands absolutely alone.

If we turn to His character, the one thing that strikes us is that about it there is nothing of the limitations of time or race which stamp all other men. He is not good after the fashion of His age, or of any other age; He is simply embodied and perfect Goodness. This Tree has shot up high above the fences that enclose the grove in which it grows, and its leaf lasts for ever.

Run over, in your mind, other great names of heroes, saints, thinkers, poets; they all bear the stamp of their age and circumstances, and the type of goodness or the manner of thought which belonged to these. Jesus Christ alone stands before men abso-

lutely free from any of the limitations which are essential in the case of every human excellence and teacher. And so He comes to us with a strange freshness, with a strange closeness; and nineteen centuries have not made Him fit less accurately to our needs than He did to those of the generation amidst which He condescended to live. Thickening mists of oblivion wrap all other great names as they recede into the past; and about the loftiest of them we have to say, 'This man, having served his generation, fell on sleep, and saw corruption.' But Jesus Christ lasts, because there is nothing local or temporary about His teaching or His character.

Now this peculiar originality, as I venture to call it, of Christ's character is a very strong argument for the truthful accuracy of the picture drawn of Him in these four Gospels. Where did these four men get their Christ? Was it from imagination? Was it from myth? Was it from the accidental confluence of a multitude of traditions? There is an old story about a painter who, in despair of producing a certain effect of storm upon the sea, at last flung his wet sponge at the canvas, and to his astonishment found that it had done the very thing he wanted. But wet sponges cannot draw likenesses; and to allege that these four men drew such a picture, in such compass, without anybody sitting for it, seems to me about the most desperate hypothesis that ever was invented. If there were no Christ, or if the Christ that was, was not like what the Gospels paint Him as being, then the authors of these little booklets are consummate geniuses, and their works stand at the very top of the imaginative literature of the world. It is more difficult to account for the Gospels, if they are not histories, than it is to

account for the Christ whom they tell us of if they are.

And then, further, there is only one key to the mystery of this originality. Christ is perfect man, high above limitations, and owing nothing to environment, because He is the Son of God. I would as soon believe that grass roots, which for years, in some meadow, had brought forth, season after season, nothing but humble green blades, shot up suddenly into a palm tree, as I would believe that simple natural descent brought all at once into the middle of the dull succession of commonplace and sinful men this radiant and unique Figure. Account for Christ, all you unbelievers! The question of to-day, round which all the battle is being fought, is the person of Jesus Christ. If He be what the Gospels tell us that He is, there is nothing left for the unbeliever worth a struggle. 'What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?' The Jews said, 'Thou art a Samaritan!' We say, 'Thou art the Christ; the Son of the living God!'

III. Lastly, the name bears witness to Christ's universality.

I presume that, in addition to what seemed His hostility to what was taken to be true Judaism, another set of facts underlay the name—viz. those which indicated His kindly relations with the people whom it was every good Jew's pleasant duty to hate with all his heart. The story of the Samaritan woman in John's Gospel, the parable of the good Samaritan, the incident of the grateful leper, who was a Samaritan, the refusal to allow the eager Apostles to bring down fire from heaven to consume inhospitable churls in a Samaritan village, were but outstanding specimens of

what must have been a characteristic of His whole career not unknown to His enemies. So they argued, 'If you love our enemies you must hate us; and you must be one of them,' thereby distorting, but yet presenting, what is the great glory of Christ's Gospel, and of Christ Himself, that He belongs to the world; and that His salvation, the sweep of His love, and the power of His Cross, are meant for all mankind.

That universality largely arises from the absence of the limitations of which I have already spoken sufficiently. Because He belongs to no one period as regards His character, He is available for all periods as regards His efficacy. Because His teaching is not dyed in the hues of any school or of any age or of any cast of thought, it suits for all mankind. This water comes clear from the eternal rock, and has no taint of any soil through which it has flowed. Therefore the thirsty lips of a world may be glued to it, and drink and be satisfied. His one sacrifice avails for the whole world.

But let me remind you that universality means also individuality, and that Jesus Christ is the Christ for all men because He is each man's Christ. The tree of life stands in the middle of the garden that all may have equal access to it. Is this universal Christ yours; thine? That is the question. Make Him so by putting out your hand and claiming your share in Him, by casting your soul upon Him, by trusting your all to Him, by listening to His word, by obeying His commands, by drinking in the fulness of His blessing. You can do so if you will. If you do not, the universal Christ is nothing to you. Make Him thine, and be sure that the sweep of His love and the efficacy of His sacrifice embrace and include thee. He is the

universal Christ ; therefore He is the only Christ ; 'neither is there salvation in any other.' Through Him all men, each man, thou, must be saved. Without Him all men, every man, thou, can not be saved. Take Him for yours, and you will find that each who possesses Him, possesses Him altogether, and none hinders the other in his full enjoyment of 'the bread of God which came down from heaven.'

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